

LESSONS  
ON THE  
BOOKS OF  
CHRONICLES

*William Kelly*

# LECTURES ON THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES

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## Preface

The readers of our publications will need no introduction to Mr. William Kelly who was certainly a great gift to the Church as an able expositor of the Word of God. For many years he was the editor of a monthly publication called *Bible Treasury*. During that time he wrote and published many expository works serially, some of which were reprinted in separate book form. His "Lectures on the Books of Chronicles" were published serially in *Bible Treasury*, but evidently not in book form. The editor and publishers of the monthly magazine *Christian Truth* felt that it was valuable ministry and should not lie unused, so it has been run serially in our publication. Now we present it as a book and hope that many Christians will find in it much food for their souls and withal a better understanding of this part of the Word of God which, needless to say, has the impress of divine inspiration stamped upon it, as upon all other parts of the "Holy Scriptures." As the reader will soon discern, these books of Chronicles are not mere fragmentary pieces of genealogy and history, but are an integral part of the Word of God written for "our learning." We have retained the author's quotations from the Scriptures as he gave them, for he was a man of much learning and was faithful to the original texts in his own translations.

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## Contents

|                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| 1 Chronicles 1-9:1 ..... | 9   |
| "    9:2-9:44 .....      | 16  |
| "    10-12 .....         | 21  |
| "    13-15 .....         | 28  |
| "    16-19 .....         | 34  |
| "    20-22 .....         | 39  |
| "    23-29 .....         | 44  |
| 2 Chronicles 1-2:3 ..... | 51  |
| "    2:4-3 .....         | 59  |
| "    4 - 6 .....         | 67  |
| "    7-12 .....          | 74  |
| "    13-20 .....         | 81  |
| "    21-25 .....         | 86  |
| "    26-29 .....         | 94  |
| "    30-31 .....         | 100 |
| "    32-36 .....         | 104 |

## **I Chronicles 1-9:1**

The books of Chronicles are much more fragmentary than those of Kings. At the same time they are more bound up with what follows, for this very reason—that they look at the line of promise and purpose, and hence, therefore, are occupied with David and those that inherited the kingdom of David's race. The books of Kings, on the other hand, look at the kingdom of Israel as a whole, and therefore show us the continuation of Samuel much more closely—show us the history of the kingdom viewed as a matter of responsibility. Hence, we have the failure of the ten tribes detailed at great length in the Kings and not in the Chronicles, because there it is not purpose, but responsibility; and we have, therefore, the contemporary kingdoms from the time of Jeroboam and Rehoboam till the extinction of the kingdom of Samaria, and then the history of the kingdom of Judah until the captivity. But the books of Chronicles look only at the history of God's kingdom in the hands of David and of his race. For that reason we here at once are connected with the whole of God's purposes from the beginning. We have the genealogy. Indeed all the early chapters are filled with genealogy for a reason which I shall afterward explain; but we begin with the beginning—"Adam, Sheth, Enosh" and so on, down to Noah, a line of ten from the beginning, followed by the various sons of Noah, and their posterity—seventy nations springing from the sons of Noah. Then again we have Abraham as a new stock and commencement. Just as Adam in verse 1, so Abraham and his sons in verse 27 are brought before us, with also a list of seventy tribes, or races, that spring from Abraham and his posterity.

It is clear, therefore, that the Spirit of God purposely presents these things. They are not done in any way loosely or arbitrarily. There is a purpose. We can readily see this in the ten names that come before us first of all—the ten forefathers of the human race, and the seventy nations branching out from the sons of Noah. Then again, we can see the seventy tribes branching out

from Abraham and his family. But there is another thing too in this, as showing not only the general way of God here, but the principle of God throughout Scripture—"first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual." We find it just the same here. Japheth and Ham, with their sons, are brought before us previous to the introduction of Shem, and the line of God's promise in Shem. Here is the Lord God of Shem. So in the same way even with Abraham. Although we come to the man that was called out, still, even there, "first that which is natural." Hence, therefore, we have Ishmael and his posterity, and even the sons of the concubine, and, last of all, "Abraham begat Isaac." But even in looking at the sons of Isaac, as the rule the sons of Esau are put first, as in the 35th verse. These are pursued, and even the allusion to the kings before there were any over the children of Israel. God's purposes ripen latest. God lets the world take its own way, and it exalts men in the earth. God means to exalt the Man that humbled Himself. We see, therefore, a common principle everywhere throughout Scripture. Thus, this genealogy, even if we only look cursorily at the first chapter, is not without spiritual fruit. There is nothing in the Bible without profit for the soul—not even a list of names.

Then we have the rapid rise of Esau's posterity, as I have already remarked. We have duke this and duke that; and, finally, in the 2nd chapter, we enter upon the called and chosen—Israel. "These are the sons," not merely of Jacob, but "of Israel." It is the purpose of God that appears. Here too they are mentioned merely in their natural order first of all—"Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah, Issachar and Zebulun, Dan, Joseph and Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher" (chap. 2:1). But the sons of Judah are very particularly brought before us in this chapter—not of Reuben nor of Simeon. The object of the book is purpose. Judah being a tribe first of all chosen for the kingdom, and that too with a view to the Messiah, we can understand why his sons should be first traced out at great length. This is brought before us, down to even the captivity, and after it; and most interesting notices there are here and there—some alas! who transgressed in the thing accursed, but others who were strengthened of God. Such is the history of man.

However, at the end of the chapter, the Spirit of God singles

out Caleb's family; for he was the man who, of all Judah in these early days, answered to God's purpose. On that I need not now dwell. We see it in Numbers, in Joshua—the peculiar place that Caleb and his daughter had, the father confident in the purpose of God to give Israel the land. Let the strength of their cities be what they might, let their men be ever so valiant, let Israel be ever so feeble, the point of difference was this—that God was with Israel and against the Canaanites. So here we find the result, for faithfulness is fruitful even in this world—much more to life everlasting.

Then comes the third chapter—the grand object, the genealogy of David. "Now these were the sons of David" (v. 1)—himself singled out from among all the line of Judah; and as with Caleb from the earliest days of the planting in the land, so with David from the time that the kingdom became evident as the purpose of God. Saul is entirely passed by. David, though later in fact, was before Saul really in purpose, and even during the days of Saul was actually anointed by Samuel the prophet. So we find here the sons of David. Here again too, "that which is natural"—these born in Hebron. They never came to the throne. "And these were born unto him in Jerusalem, Shimea and Shobal and Nathan and Solomon"—Solomon the last of these "four of Bathshua [or Bath-sheba] the daughter of Ammiel," as the Spirit of God takes care to say. No flesh shall glory in His presence. The last becomes the first. The purpose of God alone triumphs. Solomon, the last of the four, of her that was the wife of Uriah, is the man chosen to the throne. Others are mentioned too. "These were all the sons of David, beside the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister." Chap. 3:9.

And then the line of Solomon: "Solomon's son was Rehoboam." All this is traced down to the end of the chapter.

This is the first great division of these genealogies. The purpose of God is traced down first from nature in Adam, down to the kingly purpose in David and his line. Such was God's intention for the earth. It had come under a curse, but God always meant to reconcile, as we know, all things; so the Jew is here given to understand. Here is the certainty that God would recover the kingdom; He would restore the kingdom to Israel. Yet, they misunderstood the time. The disciples did the same. They thought



they were sure of it when the Lord died and rose. Not so. The Father keeps times and seasons in His own power. Still, He will restore the kingdom to Israel. And we now have this line continued as far as it was given them then to trace.

And this is another thing to bear in mind: the books of Chronicles are fragmentary. They bear the impress of the ruin that had come in to Israel. In a time of ruin, it would falsify if everything were in due order. The attempt to produce order now as a complete thing is fallacy, and would be a lie if it were made apparently true. Hence we see the utter folly of the religious world in this respect, because this is their effort. We know very well it is utter disorder when judged by the Word of God, because in point of fact even the very foundations are forgotten and supplanted. But supposing the theory were true, it would be a falsehood in its moral purpose, because God will make us feel in a time of ruin that we *are* in ruins. It is not but what His grace can interfere and abound. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." But it is a wholly different thing to assume that things are right, and to wear an appearance that only deceives.

Hence, therefore—for the truth is a very practical one—when men complain of weakness, and when they talk about power in the present state of things, there is danger—very great danger. We ought to feel our weakness. We ought to *feel* that things are ruined. We ought to mourn over the state of the Church. We ought to feel for every member of the body of Christ. When persons make themselves comfortable in a little coterie of their own, and imagine that they are the Church of God, they are only deceiving themselves. The whole state is contrary to the mind of God. The truth is that God and His grace suffice perfectly; but it is as to a remnant. Whenever we lose the sense that we are a remnant, we are false. Whenever we take any other ground than that of being those whom grace has, by the intervention of God Himself, recalled—but recalled in weakness, recalled out of ruin—we are off the ground of faith. This gives no license to disorder—not the least. We are thoroughly responsible—always responsible—but at the same time we must not assume that we have everything, because God gives us that which grace alone has secured.

This is all important, we shall find, both in our work and also in the Church of God. Here we find it in these collections of testimonies of God that are brought together in the books of Chronicles. They are fragmentary; they are meant to be fragmentary. God could have given a completeness to them if He pleased, but it would have been out of His order. God Himself has deigned and been pleased to mark His sense of the ruin of Israel by giving only fragmentary pieces of information here and there. There is nothing really complete. The two books of Chronicles savor of this very principle. This is often a great perplexity to men of learning, because they, looking upon it merely with a natural eye, cannot understand it. They fancy it altogether corrupted. Not so. It was written, advisedly and deliberately so, by the Spirit of God. So, I am persuaded, the provision by the grace of God for His people at this present time looks very feeble, looks very disorderly, to a man with a mere natural eye; but when you look into it, you will find that it is according to the mind of God, and that the pretension of having all complete would put us out of communion with His mind—would make us content with ourselves instead of feeling with Him for the broken state of His Church.

The books of Chronicles, therefore, really are a mass of fragments. We shall have more reason, perhaps, to see this as we go along; but I merely make the remark just now. They are only the fragments that remain. God Himself never gave more. In the books of Kings, we have a more complete whole; but Chronicles has a character and beauty of its own, and a moral propriety, beyond anything, because it takes up and shows that in the ruin of all else the purpose of God stands fast. That is what we have to comfort ourselves with at this present time. There is a ruined state in Christendom; but God's purposes never fail, and those who have faith settle themselves and find their comfort in the sure standing of the purpose of God.

The 4th chapter begins a somewhat new section, not that we have not had Judah before. And this is another peculiar feature of Chronicles—we have occasional repetition even where nothing is complete, but never a mere repetition. In the former section, Judah is introduced in order to bring in David and the royal line. Here Judah is brought forward because he is a leader

among the tribes of Israel. And this section is not a question of David. We have had that. That closes with the 3rd chapter. Here we have Judah again merely in his place among the different tribes. Hence we have his line in a general way carried on as before, only with a view to the people, and not the kingdom. This is the 4th chapter, with some strikingly encouraging words of the Spirit of God interspersed, on which I need not dwell now. After Judah there is Simeon (v. 24).

Then in chapter 5 comes Reuben; for, having had before us the purpose of God, we are not taken back merely to the line of nature. Reuben falls into the second place. "Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's." v. 2. This is given as a kind of parenthetical explanation of why Judah is first among the tribes, and Reuben sinks into a secondary place. Reuben, however, is now pursued; and in chapter 6, come the sons of Levi after the half tribe of Manasseh too had been introduced in the verses before. We can understand why the sons of Levi are thus brought forward. Further, we have Issachar and Benjamin all brought before us in this section—Benjamin not merely in the 7th chapter, but also in the 8th, answering a little to Judah. Thus we have a repetition. The reason is plain. Benjamin and Judah are repeated because they were each connected with royalty—Benjamin with Saul—Judah with David—and as Judah is mentioned first in relation to David, and next to the people, so Benjamin is first brought in in relation to the people, and then in relation to Saul. This is why we have Benjamin again in the 8th chapter. We have the connection with the king, but the king after the flesh. Then there is another reason why Benjamin is brought in, and that is that he had a particular connection with Jerusalem; and we shall find that this is also a grand point in the Chronicles. It is not merely the land, but Jerusalem and Zion, as I hope to show later, all being connected immediately with the purpose of God.

"So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies." Chap. 9:1. Now it is well to make a remark or two of a general kind as to the importance of these genealogies. First of all, they were even more important after the kingdom than before—at least after David came to the throne—and for this simple reason: David altered, as we shall find later on in the book, the whole system of reli-

gious worship and its appurtenances. It was he that brought the ark to Zion; and it was in the city of David that the temple was subsequently built by King Solomon. But David ordered everything with a view to the great center of the land. This was not the case before. Nothing of the kind was found during the judges, nor even during King Saul's reign. The priests and Levites were all scattered up and down the land. After David came to the throne, and was inspired of God to bring in a great change, we find this the occasion of it. The king became the central thought. The king was the one on whom, according to purpose, all hung. The reason was that the king was the type of "the great King" that is coming. Impossible that the Son of God, the Messiah, should be the King, without being the One on whom all depends for blessing. God knew from the very first that there was no way to secure blessing but by that One.

## I Chronicles 9:2-9:44

If we reign in life, it is by Him and by Him only; and if Israel is ever yet to reap blessing and to be the means of blessing throughout the earth, all depends upon the Messiah. Little did they know that when they rejected Him! They never entered into the mind of God; and, when Jesus came, they were less prepared than ever. Never did God see them in a lower condition. They had been grosser; they had been more offensive in their abominations, but their heart was far from Him. In vain did they worship Him. Hence, therefore, they deliberately preferred man—and man false and guilty and rebellious—to the Lord of glory. “Not this man, but Barabbas.” How utterly, then, all was ruined—ruined morally before the destruction came upon Judah and Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans. It is always so. Outward judgment *follows*, and is in no way the *cause* of our misery. The misery is from within, from self, from Satan’s power through self.

So it was with Israel, so it is with each; and so, further, are we delivered by one Man outside ourselves, and that one Man the Son of God. All depends upon Him, therefore, for us now, for every day’s blessing—not merely for our salvation, but for every day’s light and guidance. All our mistakes arise because, alas! not Christ governs, but self. All our happiness is found where Christ takes the first place. So it will be with Israel by-and-by. But this was not understood then. God shows that He understood it all along, and that He revealed it in His Word; for this it is that accounts for the books of Chronicles—the purpose of God. It is all hinging upon His purpose, upon His Messiah—His purpose to send His Son to take up that purpose and give it solidity, to make it unfailing.

David, therefore, acting as a type of the Messiah, orders everything anew. The old state of things according to Moses did not abide in its arrangements. The grand principles, of course, are everlasting; but there was a most important difference in the form, and that difference of form was due to the superior glory

of the one who was there even as a type. How much more when we remember the antitype, the Lord Jesus. David, therefore, orders an entirely new arrangement in this respect. The priests were divided into courses, and one course was to be always on the spot in Jerusalem. That state of things is not in the least referred to in the Pentateuch. But David not only arranged for a house of God, but houses for the priests. There were many mansions around that central house of God for the priests; and there the priests, each according to their course, lived. The consequence was that they required to have the offerings brought there—to Jerusalem. We can see the reason why. God had been preparing the way, even from the beginning, for the offering at that one place that is named—where His name should be placed—that one place that He should choose. Then when the place was chosen and the temple built, we can understand all, because these priests could not have subsisted a day unless Israel had, according to the command of God, brought their offerings and their sacrifices and the like. On this they subsisted. Had there been neglect in this respect, the priests must have of necessity gone back to their own places of residence, and left the altar and the incense, and all the order of the temple, completely neglected.

Accordingly, then, we see the great importance of the change that now took place, and why the genealogies became of such importance, because the books of Chronicles were written after the captivity, when everything was thrown into disorder. The Jews, disheartened by the destruction that they never would believe till it came, might have thought, "What is the use of a genealogy? What is the use of caring now about our lands or houses? Everything is ruined. All is gone." But the man who believed God, knew that seventy years would see them returning from their captivity; and, therefore, care for God and confidence in His Word would make them jealously preserve their genealogies in order that, when they did return, they might enter upon the allotment of God. For this was what made every homestead in Israel so precious—that it was God that gave it. It was not merely something that man earned by his own labor or skill. It was the gift of God to them.

Therefore, if an Israelite was bound up very particularly with his family, it was no mere matter of vanity or pride, as among

us very often; but in Israel it was bound up with the purpose of God. It was no question of what some rogue had done, so, perhaps, getting his family into favor, as is very often among the Gentiles; but in Israel, all was ordered of God. It was *God's* appointment, and the worthies there were men who were worthy according to God—men who had, by their achievements in faith, won, according to the will of God, a place for Israel; for all their blessings were more or less connected, although all was poor and feeble compared with that which shall be, but still it was a type of what is to be. Hence, therefore, patriotism, a genealogical line, families that held on to the remotest antiquity—these had a divine character in Israel, which they have not in any other country under the sun. Elsewhere it often becomes offensive; indeed, if people only knew the truth, a thing rather to be ashamed of than to be proud of.

But in Israel it was not so. There, although there were sad blots, and blots upon the fairest, still, for all that, there was that which was truly divine working in the midst of that poor people from the beginning downward. We can see therefore that these genealogies had a character altogether higher than might at first sight appear; and I have no doubt that most of us have read these genealogies, thinking it was high time to skip over them. I have no doubt we have often wondered why they were ever written at all, and why they should be in the Bible, though, perhaps, without in the least wishing to disparage what was inspired—for I am now supposing pious people. But I am quite persuaded that very few persons, comparatively, have a clear distinct judgment why God has attached so much importance to these genealogies. One reason why I have dwelt upon it now is this—to give, as I trust, a truer view, a simpler understanding, why the Lord in this wondrous book should give us so much that appears to be little more than a list of names.

Well, when they returned, these genealogies would be of capital importance, and of capital importance for the Israelites in order that they should not usurp—in order that they should not be unjust—in order that they should be content with what God had given to them—in order that they should link themselves with all that was great and glorious in God's sight in the past. These genealogies were of the greatest moment for this. In their

weakness they would require every cheer and encouragement.

But, further, they were under responsibility, according to their substance, to give to the temple of God—to remember the priests and Levites who had none inheritance among their brethren, and, more particularly, as the order set up by the king would be restored again, the courses of priests. We find it in the New Testament. We see the birth of John the Baptist under these very circumstances. His father, according to his course—the course of Abia—was at that time doing service at the temple. He had left his house in the country. He was in Jerusalem. Thus the genealogies were of the greatest moment in order to settle justly, and according to the will of God, that which could not be haphazard and of the will of man; but there should be faith in it, piety in it, an owing of God in it.

These, therefore, seem to be among the grounds—I do not say all the grounds, but among the grounds—why God led some of the Jews to pay such attention to their genealogies. And it is remarkable that at least one tribe, if not two, is left out here. I presume they did not think of it; many individuals in all the tribes may have been careless, but it is a solemn thing to find that, from one cause or another, almost in every case in the Bible where tribes are mentioned, one or two are left out. It is the failure of man. No matter what it is, it is the failure of man. If Moses speaks prophetically, Moses also leaves out. This was a sad and solemn sign—the omission of a tribe. The fact is, there will always be these irregularities till Jesus comes. There never will be order maintained in this world according to God until the Lord Jesus reigns. But at this time there was a peculiar disorder—the utter breakup of the people, of the kingdom, the carrying away into captivity, could well account for this. The genealogies, therefore, are very partial; but they were all reckoned by genealogies. And if a priest could not prove his genealogy, he was not allowed, as we know from the book of Ezra, which is the successor of the Chronicles—the natural sequel of these books. The priests were not allowed to minister at all unless they could prove their genealogy, though they might be ever so truly sons of Aaron.

The fact itself was not enough. There must be the proper register and proof of their genealogy—a thing of very great im-



portance for us now, I would just observe, to draw spiritual profit from; for now in these days, when there is a universal profession of Christianity, we are called upon to prove our genealogies. You see there is no difficulty in bearing the name. The time was when a man confessed Christ to the danger of his life. Now it is a cheap and common thing. Nearly everybody does it. All the world (so to speak) is baptized in these lands. Therefore, plainly, in answering to the type of a priest as of a spiritual man that draws near to God, one must look for more than the mere fact of being baptized. It is not enough—we all feel that—and without knowing that we are acting upon this very principle; that is, we require the priests to prove their genealogies. By-and-by, when the Lord comes, He may discover many a one that we may not have thought of. That does not prove we were wrong. It does show how full of grace He is, and how perfect His wisdom. But we must go by what appears. He acts by what is. He is the truth. We are not the truth. We can judge only according to evidence that comes before us.

So in the 9th chapter we have the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This is the peculiar feature of what begins here—the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And Benjamin is particularly mentioned with a view to that. But, further, the Levites and the priests are brought before us for the very same reason, and their various offices and work. And last of all, because they had been connected in so special a place—and, indeed, were of Benjamin—of the family of Saul, as mentioned before. These repetitions are very striking in the book. They are not casual; they are all connected with God's purpose, for now the great object is to show the passing away of man's will in order that God's purpose should reign. Man chose Saul for reasons of his own. The children of Israel wished a king like the nations. This never could satisfy God. God must choose a man after His own heart. Hence, therefore, the first part of the regular history of Chronicles, after the genealogies, is a brief notice of the passing away of the house of Saul in the next chapter.

## I Chronicles 10-12

"Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinidab, and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul. And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers." Chap. 10:1-3. And then we find his death and his armor bearer's death: "So Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together." This is the introduction to the book of Chronicles.

The consequence was that all the men of Israel fled. Their hope was gone. But God was able to bring in the dawn of a better day; and, although the Philistines triumphed, and Saul was stripped, and his head was taken, and his armor, and sent to the land of the Philistines, carrying tidings to their idols and to the people; and although they put his armor in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon, and it seemed as if they had entirely their own way, yet the triumph of the wicked is for a very brief season. There were those who had sufficient respect for Saul to arise—certain valiant men of Jabesh-Gilead. "They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days." It was a noble act, and acceptable to God; and yet it was not but what Saul was an offense to God.

This is beautiful, this is grace, that God should specially single out the deed of these men, even for a king with whom He was so deeply offended. How little we enter into the mind of God! Very likely we should have thought the men of Jabesh-Gilead were very foolish. Why should they meddle? No doubt there was many a follower of David that would have blamed the men of Jabesh-Gilead. David did not. David understood the mind of God; and David is nowhere more noble than when he pours out his lament over not only Jonathan, but Saul. Indeed, it was

what he had lived in; for if Saul envied and hated David, never did David so feel toward king Saul. "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against Jehovah, even against the word of Jehovah, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it."

There was both the disobedience to God's word, and the seeking of the word that was not of God, but of the devil. "And enquired not of Jehovah: therefore He slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse." But all the intervening circumstances are left out. It is the purpose of God that is the point here—not history, not responsibility, but purpose, divine purpose. This is the key to the difference between Kings and Chronicles.

"Then all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and Jehovah thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed My people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over My people Israel. Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before Jehovah; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of Jehovah by Samuel." Chap. 11:1-3. But further, David and all Israel went to Jerusalem—another grand point of the book. "And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus; where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, Thou shalt not come hither." That is, they defied him. "Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which is the city of David."

He had offered it as a great prize that whosoever took that stronghold should be captain of the host.

It is remarkable that Joab steps forward—not Abishai, not any one of those most honorable three, not Eleazar or Jashobeam, or any of the others (the thirty, those worthies that were with him in the cave). None of them, but Joab. Joab was not among them. The truth is that Joab was an ambitious man. He did not care to expose his person more than was necessary; but when there was anything to be got, Joab was the man. Joab was ready for action then, not to suffer but to gain. Joab therefore

goes forward and takes the stronghold, and becomes chief. So it will always be till the true David comes. There will be no Joabs then. His people shall be all righteous; but till then every type has its failure, and it is a very important thing in Scripture to see first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual. It is the purpose of God, but it is the purpose of God in David, and not in Christ. It is the purpose of God in one that looked for Christ, loved Christ, waited for Christ, but nevertheless was not Christ. When Christ comes, all will be according to the mind of God. "So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief. And David dwelt in the castle; therefore they called it the city of David. And he built the city round about, even from Millo round about: and Joab repaired the rest of the city. So David waxed greater and greater: for Jehovah of hosts was with him."

Then follow the true worthies of David, the true warriors, not for what was to be got, but for David. And these are most minutely brought before us to the end of the chapter, not only their great deeds in cutting down the enemy, but their intense love for David. Hence the Spirit of God tells the tale of how "David was in the hold, and the Philistines' garrison was then at Bethlehem. And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate!" He knew his native place, and longed after the water that he had, no doubt, often drunk. He uttered this without a thought of anything further; but these three men "brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David."

This was beautiful. It was no purpose of war. It was entirely outside the expedition. It was love. But David's act was more beautiful. "But David would not drink of it, but poured it out to Jehovah, and said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing; shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest." There are others however—not, it is true, among the three mightiest, but who were most honorable. God loves to mention what is an honor to His people; and hence,

therefore, after each of their names we find a record of their deeds. The Lord will do this and more for those who now and ever have lived and suffered for the name of the Lord. This then introduces us to David with his citadel Zion, and his warrior band.

In the 12th chapter we have another account, deeply interesting—not those that had been the companions so signal for their mighty deeds, but those that gathered round him. First of all, “These are they that came to David to Ziklag,” that is, just before the close of all, when the kingdom was upon the point of turning. And a very beautiful thing it is to see that when God is about to work anything special on the earth, He knows how to give the secret of it to His people. There was a providential working on God’s part, but there was a spiritual working in the hearts of His people.

It is the very same thing now in the consciousness that the kingdom of the Lord is at hand, in the deeper feeling of it, in the way in which it affects souls, far beyond anything that was ever known; not excitement, not people merely in a panic because the end is at hand, or persons fixing a date, to be disappointed and perhaps give up their faith, but persons who calmly rest upon His Word. Perhaps they could not particularly say why; but this they know, that, whereas they did not attach any importance to the scriptures that speak of His coming, now they do. This is not without the Spirit of God. So with the men of Israel. There was a movement of heart, even while Saul was still alive. There was a rush to David after Saul was dead; but I do not speak of that. This is a very different and a lower thing altogether. But the movement of heart to gather the men of Israel to David in sympathy, before it could be a matter of external allegiance, is a matter much to be noted. These then are described.

“Now these are they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish; and they were among the mighty men, helpers of the war. They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow, even of Saul’s brethren of Benjamin.” Chap. 12:1, 2. The first men that are named were the very last that man would have expected—the men of Benjamin. It is not that there were so many. They were slow afterward. Even when David came to the throne, the men

of Benjamin still hung on to the house of Saul. They were slow as a whole, as a tribe, but God showed His sovereignty and His gracious purpose by calling "of Saul's brethren" from out of that very tribe, and who are the very first that He names as "of Benjamin." Thus we must never be disheartened; we must never suppose that any circumstances can hinder the way of God. God will bring out to the name of the Lord Jesus in the very last spot that you expect. We must leave room for the power of the Word of God, and also, above all, for His own grace, His own magnifying of Himself and His call. The men of Benjamin are the first, then, that are named as having joined themselves to David. "The chief was Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite."

Then further we find Gadites. "And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains. . . . These are they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all its banks." It was even more difficult then than at any other time. "And they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the east, and toward the west. And there came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David. And David went out to meet them, and answered and said unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you; but if ye come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it. Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was the chief of the captains, and he said, Thine we are, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse; peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band." Then we find of Manasseh also, they helped David; "for at that time," we are told, "day by day there came to David to help him."

But from the 23rd verse we have another. The crisis was come; Saul was gone. "And these are the numbers of the bands that were ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of

Jehovah." Now it was not so much the anticipation of faith; it was the manifest following of the word of the Lord. Saul was gone. There was no question that ought to have exercised a heart. And we find, singular to say, "The children of Judah that bare shield and spear were six thousand and eight hundred." One of the greatest of the tribes, taken all and all, the greatest tribe of the twelve, the very one, too, that David belonged to, yet there were only "six thousand and eight hundred ready armed to the war." "Not by might nor by power." How different where man is in question. Take the false prophet of Mecca. Who were those that were his first band? His own family. Take any that are false; it is their own friends, their own companions, some tie of flesh and blood. But with David the first band, we are taught, were those who were most opposed; and, further, the least comparatively in numbers were those that were of his own kith and kin—only six thousand eight hundred. And when you come to look at the others, you will find it is more remarkable.

Why, even of Simeon, a tribe not to be named with Judah, there were "mighty men of valor for the war seven thousand and one hundred." "Of the children of Levi," although they were properly outside such work, and were more connected with the service of the temple, "four thousand and six hundred. And Jehoiada was the leader of the Aaronites." Even they, you see, felt the all-importance of this that was at hand. "And with him were three thousand and seven hundred," so that between the two there were evidently more. "And Zadok, a young man mighty of valor, and of his father's house twenty and two captains. And of the children of Benjamin, the kindred of Saul, three thousand; for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul"; that accounts for the smallness of number there.

But there is no account of Judah; it is simply left out. The fact is that God would not have His king trust to links of flesh and blood. "And of the children of Ephraim twenty thousand and eight hundred, mighty men of valor, famous throughout the house of their fathers. And of the half tribe of Manasseh eighteen thousand, which were expressed by name, to come and make David king. And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do"—a great change in Issachar. In the prophecy of Jacob

he was merely "an ass couching down between two burdens," but now the men of Issachar had profited. They were men that had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do. "The heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment." Of Zebulun, a comparatively unimportant tribe in Israel, there were no less than fifty thousand "such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war . . . which could keep rank. They were not of double heart." And of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear thirty and seven thousand. And of the Danites expert in war twenty and eight thousand and six hundred. And of Asher, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand. And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war, for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand."

It is very evident that, excepting Benjamin, which, for the reason that is stated, was altogether exceptional and who held fast in the greater part to the house of Saul, Judah stands extremely short in all this list. So it was that God would not permit that the king of His purpose should be beholden to the strength of man or the ties of nature. But whatever might be the shortcoming here and there, and the differences among them, "All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king." That is, it was not a divided heart. It was set upon God's purpose; and not only those who were there, but those who through circumstances were absent. "And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking; for their brethren had prepared for them." And so the scene of festivity and joy is brought before us. There was joy in Israel.



## I Chronicles 13-15

The next thing shows us what was most in David's heart. Not the throne—that was most in *their* hearts—that David should reign. But David's heart thought of Jehovah's throne; and therefore he consults and says: "If it seem good unto you, and that it be of Jehovah our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren everywhere, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us. And let us bring again the ark of our God to us; for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul." Chap. 13:2, 3. And all the congregation agreed. "So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim."

Shihor is, I presume, not the Nile, although it may be called so sometimes, but rather that brook of El-heresh that divides the land of Israel from the borders of the desert on the Egyptian side. "And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kirjath-jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God Jehovah, that dwelleth between the cherubim whose name is called on it. And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab; and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart."

There was the great mistake. It was all very well for Philistines to send the ark of God in a cart—not for Israel. Israel should have known better. When the Philistines did it, there was a propriety. They had an object too. It was not to be driven; it was to be committed to the kine that were yoked to it. It was particularly meant as a test, because the cows would naturally care for the young they had left behind; and the very point of God's power and manifestation of His glory was this—that although there was very natural feeling on the part of the cows to go after their young, on the contrary they took an opposite direction, and carried the new cart with the ark upon it to the land of Israel, thus giving a most illustrious proof of the power of God above nature. It was not chance; it was not nature; it was God that governed.

But with Israel it was a very different thing. Yet I presume they adopted the cart because it was the last thing. So it is that we often do. Even a Philistine tradition will carry away the people of God, so that although the only people, as far as we know, that ever employed a cart for the ark of God were these Philistines, here we find that wonderful man David, and the priests and the Levites, and indeed all Israel, all joining in this Philistinian way of bringing in the ark of God to the site that was destined for it.

Well, one bad step leads to another, and, although there was apparent joy, and no doubt there was plenty of outward honor to the ark, when they came to the threshing-floor of Chidon, God allowed that there should be something that tested their state. "Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzza, and He smote him, because he put his hand to the ark." He at least ought to have known better. He who belonged to the tribe of Levi—he who ought to have felt that God was able to take care of His own ark, let oxen stumble or not—he put forth his hand unhallowedly to sustain the sign of the presence of the God of Israel as if He were not there to care for His own glory. He was smitten on the spot, "and there he died before God." David was displeased, instead of humbling himself, "because Jehovah had made a breach upon Uzza; wherefore that place is called Perez-uzza to this day. And David was afraid of God that day, saying, "How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?" That was the next effect; first displeasure, then dread. "So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had." There was such manifest blessing in that house that, as we find afterward, it could not abide; but there it abode at any rate for three months.

The next chapter, however, gives us not so much this religious picture of the state of things, which you will find to be extremely important afterward, but what I may call more practical—the manner in which the throne of David was regarded by the Gentiles—not the humiliation of the king before the ark of God (David's relation to Jehovah) but the Gentiles' relation to David.

"Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and timber of cedars, with masons and carpenters, to build him an house. And David perceived that Jehovah had confirmed him king over Israel, for his kingdom was lifted up on high, because of his people Israel." Chap. 14:1, 2. The effect upon the Gentiles showed how truly it was Jehovah who had exalted David. Nobody ever thought of that when Saul was there.

We find, then, David in Jerusalem, and the Philistines now thinking that as he was anointed king it was time to bestir themselves. "So all the Philistines went up to seek David. And David heard of it, and went out against them. And the Philistines came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim." But David abides in the simplicity which brought him to the throne. He inquired of God. He did not say, Now I have got an army; if I was a conqueror over the Philistines in the days of my weakness, how much more when now in power! Not so. He inquired of Jehovah. It requires more faith to be dependent in the day of prosperity than in the day of adversity; and there is where we are often put to the test, and souls that stand well when they are tried, often fall deeply when they have been blest greatly of the Lord. This does not prove that the blessing was not of God; it does prove that we may fail to walk in dependence on God. But as yet David stood, and stood because dependent. "And David inquired of God, saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? and wilt Thou deliver them into mine hand?"—for that was the great point. "And Jehovah said unto him, Go up; for I will deliver them into thine hand." There was his answer. "So they came up to Baal-perazim; and David smote them there. Then David said, God hath broken in upon mine enemies by mine hand like the breaking forth of waters; therefore they called the name of that place Baal-perazim" (the place of breaches). "And when they had left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burned with fire."

Thus you see vengeance was taken, according to Israel's God, on the insult done to the ark of God. If they had carried off the ark, they never burned it. It burned them, rather, and obliged them to consult how it should be restored to the God of Israel—to His people. But in this case they left their gods, and David burned them. Such was the requisition of the law of God as we

find in Deuteronomy. David, therefore, walks not only in dependence and in obedience, but, further, "the Philistines yet again spread themselves abroad in the valley." That might have been an accident; "therefore David inquired again of God, and God said to him, Go not up after them." How beautiful! We learn that God would have us ever to wait on Him; for the answer of God at one time may not at all be the answer at another. "Go not up after them; turn away from them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And it shall be, when thou shalt hear a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt go out to battle; for God is gone forth before thee to smite the host of the Philistines. David therefore did as God commanded him: and they smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gazer. And the fame of David went out into all lands; and Jehovah brought the fear of him upon all nations."

Now the heart of David turns back, for meanwhile God has been blessing the house of Obed-edom. "And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched for it a tent." Chap. 15:1. His heart could not rest without that. "Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites." Now he has learned. He had been waiting upon God. He had got his answer from God in the outward affairs of the kingdom; now he gathers the mind of God as to what concerns His worship, and why his former plan had failed. "Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for them hath Jehovah chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto Him for ever. And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem to bring up the ark of Jehovah unto his place, which he had prepared for it. And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites."

Here we find the greatest care not merely to have Israel, but to have the priests and the Levites. But it is David that does it. The difference is remarkable—that now it is no longer a Moses or an Aaron. It is no longer the high priest. He is not the highest. There is a higher than the high priest. The king is above all—the shadow of Messiah. So we have them, then, ranged in due order. And David calls for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and tells them that they were the chief of the fathers of the Levites, that they must sanctify themselves, not merely the Levites who did

the work, but these that were at their head. "Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of Jehovah God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, Jehovah our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not after the due order."

We are often surprised why the Lord should deal with those who are walking according to the Word of God so as to expose them when anything goes wrong—why God should not allow things to be hidden, but should bring out what is painful and humiliating. This is the reason. It is the very fact of having His Word—the very fact of seeking to walk by the Spirit of God, by His Word. God, instead of allowing to pass what would be concealed elsewhere, discovers it. Thus we have all the profit, but we have the shame—all the profit of God's Word, but the shame of our own want of proper feeling. So it was with David and Israel now; "So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of Jehovah God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of Jehovah." And we find another remarkable feature now, and that is that David appoints, according to his word, music and psalmody. "And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy."

This is no warrant for Christians using such instruments in the worship of God, because the distinctive feature of the Christian is, as the Apostle says, to "sing with the spirit and with the understanding also." But an earthly people would have an earthly form of expressing their praise. Therefore all is in season. "So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel." And then we find the singers and others—the doorkeepers, even—everything appointed in the most orderly manner.

"So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams. And

David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers; David also had upon him an ephod of linen." He takes a priestly place. He was the king, but although he takes the lead and was the manifest chief of all this great procession which brought the ark of God to Zion, nevertheless it is no show of royal apparel or of earthly grandeur. David was most exalted when he took the place of nearness to the ark of God. The linen and the ephod were for the very purpose that he might fitly be near to the ark of God. That was his point—not the throne but the ark. He had the throne—valued the throne as God's gift, and himself chosen and called to it; but the ark of God was to him incomparably nearer and deeper.

"Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah with shouting, and with the sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of Jehovah came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw David dancing and playing; and she despised him in her heart." But there are no details here. We must look to the book of Kings for completeness. The Chronicles give us simply a glance, a fragment, and nothing more. The great point is God's part, and not man's. Michal merely represented the unbelief of Saul's house, the unbelief of the natural heart. She had no sympathy. She felt herself degraded with David's humbling himself before the ark of Jehovah. She had no appreciation of the moral grandeur of the scene.

I shall not dwell upon the next chapter now, except just to look at the simple fact that they brought in the ark, and that David, filled with joy himself, sheds joy around about him, and dealt accordingly to every one of Israel, as we are told; and then come the thanksgiving and the psalm, on the details of which I do not enter now.

## I Chronicles 16-19

I said but little of the Psalm that was sung on that day, delivered by David to Asaph and his brethren. In point of fact, it consists of portions of several Psalms put together in what might seem a singular manner, but surely with divine wisdom. They are taken from the 4th and 5th books of Psalms—I suppose most here are aware that the Psalms consist of five books with definite characters. The 4th book consists of those Psalms that anticipate the establishment of the kingdom of Jehovah; and the 5th book, the results of that kingdom. However, there is this particularly to be noted—that the ark of God was now pitched in a tent provisionally in Jerusalem. It was no longer with the tabernacle. This was a most striking change, and it belonged to the peculiarity of David's position. The authority of the king was the center of Israel now—the type of the Lord Jesus—for God has reserved the place of chief honor for His Son, and David represents this. Hence we see that the priests retired into a secondary place; the king came forward prominently. So it is said, "He left there, before the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, Asaph and his brethren to minister before the ark continually." The ark, which was the throne of Jehovah in Israel, was now in this close connection with the king more than with the priests. By-and-by all was ranged round this center, but it was only a provisional state of things.

David's heart is occupied with the glory of the future for Israel (chap. 17), and he tells the prophet Nathan of the exercise of his spirit. He felt it an egregious thing that he should dwell in a house of cedars while the ark of the covenant of Jehovah was only under curtains. Nathan bids him do all that was in his heart, for God was with him. But Nathan here had not the mind of God. The purpose of David's heart was right, but not the time or way. God had another plan, and this only is good and wise. So Nathan the same night is told by God to go and tell His servant, David, "Thus saith Jehovah, thou shalt not build Me a house to dwell in." It was reserved for Solomon. Nothing,

however, can be more touching than Jehovah's message to His servant. He had gone with Israel from tent to tent after He brought them up out of Egypt; He had walked with them, but never had told any of the judges to build Him a house. He had taken David from the lowest position to be ruler over His people Israel. He had been with him everywhere—cut off his enemies, made him a name, ordained a place for His people that there they should dwell and be moved no more; "Neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more as at the beginning, and since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel." He would subdue all his enemies, but instead of David building the Lord a house, Jehovah was going to build David a house; and till that was done, He could not have a house built for Himself. How blessed are the ways of God! He must do all things for us before we can act for Him. David must have a house built for him. That is, the kingdom of Israel must be established firmly and immovably in the house of David; and not till then would Jehovah accept a house to be built by David's son. In fact, Jehovah was looking onward to Christ; and the whole meaning and value of the choice of David's house, and especially of David's son, was in view of the Messiah.

There is a remarkable omission in this chapter as compared with what we have already seen in Kings, strikingly illustrating the difference between Kings and Chronicles. In Kings, Jehovah tells David through the prophet that if his sons should be disobedient, He would chastise them; but He would not remove His mercy from them forever. It was not to be exterminating judgment, but chastening mercy. This disappears here. He simply says, "He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be My son: and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee: but I will settle him in Mine house and in My kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore."

Kings is the book of responsibility, Chronicles of God's providence. This explains, therefore, the omission here of that which is so important in the book of Kings. The book everywhere presents the responsibility of the kings—not so much of the people, but of the kings, and hence, therefore, of David's sons



or successors among the race. But inasmuch as the great point of Chronicles is no longer to show the moral government of God, and how truly kings as well as people reap according to their sowing, but rather to show this—that God's plan, God's intention, God's mind alone stands, so all the contingent circumstances of the house of David are left out of the Chronicles; only the ultimate thought of God is given.

Now, nothing more certainly will be fulfilled, for God will never give up Israel until He shall have established the throne in the Person of the true Son of David, the Lord Jesus. David bows to God, and, as it is said, comes and sits before Jehovah, saying, "Who am I, O Jehovah God, and what is mine house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto? And yet this was a small thing in Thine eyes, O God; for Thou hast also spoken of Thy servant's house for a great while to come." Indeed He has—as long as the earth shall endure. "And hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree." No wonder, seeing he was the forerunner of Him who will rule the whole earth in a way that has never yet been true of mortal man! "What can David speak more to Thee for the honor of Thy servant? for Thou knowest Thy servant."

Those who apply all this truth to the gospel greatly miss the profit of the passage. It is not but that we are entitled as Christians to take the comfort of the grace of God, or that we are not to rejoice in the glory of our Lord Jesus; but then there is a double mischief done by applying this to the kingdom as we know it under the gospel. First, it hinders us from seeing the deeper glory of the Lord, and our own higher relationship, because we are not mere subjects in a kingdom as the Jews will be even in this time of blessing that is predicted. No doubt we are in the kingdom of God's dear Son, but how? We are kings; we are kings with Christ even now. We are not yet reigning, but we are kings—kings before the reigning takes place. We shall reign with Christ, but meanwhile we are made not more surely priests than kings. "To Him that loveth us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and *made* us kings and priests."

There is the great mistake which is made by those who apply the prediction to the present time, and to the present exaltation of Christ who is sitting as the rejected King in a new glory of

which He is the head; and He is the head in order to bring in the grand counsel of God that we shall be His body—not merely subjects over whom He rules. But then there is another mischief that is wrought by the misapplication I have spoken of, and that is that people blot out the future for Israel. They do not see that God maintains that people in His secret providence, although He cannot any longer own them publicly as His people. But He will by-and-by convert them, restore them, exalt them, as no people ever have been—not even Israel in the times of David and Solomon. Hence we see how what might appear to be a trivial error may be fraught with the worst consequences both as to the present and as to the future.

David then enters into the grandeur of the plans of God, and delights to think not only of His grace toward himself, but also “what one nation in the earth is like Thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be His own people, to make Thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before Thy people, whom Thou has redeemed out of Egypt?” Now, it is one quality of what is divine, that it does not wear out. What is human does. All the works of men’s hands grow old, but not so with what is of God according to new creation—according to Christ. Hence, therefore, the end will be brighter than the beginning; and man’s notion of a mere wistful retrospect at a lost paradise is poor comparatively, for what God shows us is a paradise of God that will be the end, and not merely the restoration, of the paradise of man. So with Israel. They will have the kingdom incomparably more blessedly under Christ than under David or Solomon. “Therefore now, Jehovah, let the thing that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant and concerning his house be established for ever, and do as Thou hast said. Let it even be established, that Thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, Jehovah of hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel: and let the house of David Thy servant be established before Thee.”

In the next chapter (18) the Spirit of God shows us the power that was conferred upon David. He smote the Philistines who were the tyrannous enemies of Israel in Saul’s day, by whom Saul himself was slain and his family. David smote them and subdued them. He smote Moab, the old enemy, the envious and spiteful against the people. “And the Moabites became David’s

servants and brought gifts. And David smote Hadarezer king of Zobah unto Hamath." This power extended beyond those who immediately surrounded Israel. "And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadarezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. Then David put garrisons in Syria-damascus; and the Syrians became David's servants, and brought gifts. Thus Jehovah preserved David whithersoever he went." Accordingly, we find that David dedicates the spoils, the silver and the gold, "from Edom and from Moab, and from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines, and from Amalek." Nor was it only David, but his servants, on whom God put honor. "So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people," and had his kingdom duly set out with servants adequate to the work.

In chapter 19, however, we see that there were those who distrusted David's generosity. The children of Ammon could not understand that David should show kindness to Hanun, the son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to him; and therefore the princes of Ammon, thinking that it was merely a political device, in order to overthrow the land by spying it out, suggest an act of the greatest contempt for David's servants; but this only brought the most grievous retribution upon themselves. No doubt they hired chariots, but it was in vain! and, further, the Syrians were called in, but they were no help. They were put to the worse. Then they tried the Syrians beyond the river. Perhaps they would do better. The Syrians fled before Israel, so much so as to complete the slaughter. "And when the servants of Hadarezer saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they made peace with David, and became his servants: neither would the Syrians help the children of Ammon any more."



## I Chronicles 20-22

In chapter 20 we see David tarrying at Jerusalem, and Joab leading forth the army against Rabbah. This was a sad epoch for David; but, strikingly enough, the book of Chronicles says nothing about it. Its object is not at all to refer to a single sin, except what was connected with the purpose of God. I do not mean by this that God ever prompts a man to sin, but there are those sorrowful passages in our history which God connects with His great mercy and His purpose respecting us. Others are merely the willfulness of our nature without any such connection. Hence, therefore, we find that there is not a word here said about the matter of Bath-sheba.

But the next chapter (21) shows us the effort of Satan, too successful, to entice David into what was a grievous sin, particularly in him—reckoning up the strength of Israel. Was he a Gentile then? Could David allow the thought that it was his own prowess, or his people's, that had wrought these great victories? Was it not God? No doubt He had employed David and his servants. He had put honor upon them all. But it was God. Hence, therefore, David's wishing to number Israel was a very grievous evil in the eyes of a worldly politician like Joab. It was not that Joab would trouble much about a sin, provided he could see any good result of it; but he could not understand how a man like David should compromise himself so deeply without the smallest change; for, after all, the numbering of the people would not bring one more man. Why, therefore, take so much trouble and run the risk of a sin, without any practical fruit? This was Joab's reasoning. But the king's word prevailed against Joab, and Joab goes on his mission and gives the sum of the number of the people. It was not completed, but he brought the sum.

"And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew the sword; and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them." The plans of

men do not succeed, more particularly among God's people. "The king's word was abominable to Joab. And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He smote Israel." This seems extraordinary at first sight—why God should smite Israel—but God was wise. It was Israel that became a snare and a boast to the king. Did he not number them? They must be decimated now. God would reduce the number, and would make David feel that, instead of being a blessing to His people, he was a curse through his folly and his pride. David, therefore, was obliged to own to God, "I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech Thee, do away the iniquity of Thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."

But no! Confession does not always hinder the chastening of God. The mind of Jehovah was made up. "I offer thee three things," said He: "choose one of them—either three years' famine, or three months to be destroyed before the foe, or three days of the sword of Jehovah"—not of the enemy—"even the pestilence in the land." David owns the great strait and perplexity of his soul, but he chooses the last; and he was right. "Let me fall into the hand of Jehovah, for very great are His merices. Let me not fall into the hand of man." David preferred—and justly, in my opinion—the direct hand of Jehovah. What was secondary, he felt repulsive—the famine. He could not bear that God should appear to be starving His people and condemning them to this slow death; or, on the other hand, that the foe should exalt themselves over Israel. This was abominable to his soul. But that there should be an evident chastening inflicted by God's hand, by the destroying angel—this he chose. "So Jehovah sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men." In the course of it "God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, Jehovah beheld, and He repented Him of the evil and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough; stay now thine hand."

This occurred by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, for the Jebusite was in the land. The Canaanites still dwelt in the land. It will be so till Jesus comes and reigns, and then the Canaanite will be no longer in the land. And, what is more, God marks His grace; for all is in grace here. It was there He stopped—the last place where one would have expected it—at the thresh-

ingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. Why there? Because there God meant to mark sovereign grace. "And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of Jehovah stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem." God gave him to see this. "Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let Thine hand, I pray Thee, O Jehovah my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on Thy people, that they should be plagued."

Thus he takes the consequence of the sin upon himself. This was beautiful in David; we may say that it was natural; it was right. It was far, immeasurably, inferior to the Lord Jesus. There there was no sin, and yet He took all the sin upon Himself—suffered for sins "just for unjust, that He might bring us to God." But here it was the king that had been unjust, that had brought this scourge upon the people. Nevertheless, now at least, he is used by the grace of God. Now he presents himself for the blow, but sovereign grace must reign. "Then the angel of Jehovah commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto Jehovah in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite." The place where mercy rejoiced against judgment becomes the locality of the altar. This shows where the temple was afterward to be built—where the plague was stayed by divine mercy. "David went up at the saying of Gad."

We find an interesting scene between David and Ornan who was willing that all should be given; but no; it must be David's gift, not a Jebusite's. "And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for Jehovah, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight. And David built there an altar unto Jehovah, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings." How striking! The man that had brought all the trouble—the guilty king, but the type of the Holy One of Israel—the type of Him that gave up His *life* a ransom for many.

Then in the 22nd chapter he opens his lips in the Spirit of God, and says, "This is the house of Jehovah God, and this is the

altar of the burnt offering for Israel." Here he had found the place. Such was the way of God. The numbering of the people was a sin, no doubt, on David's part; but it was a sin that was now completely lost in the grace of God who had thus shown Himself for the people, and also made Jerusalem to be the evident spot where God would hearken to man upon the earth. And God would bring in that which would stay the judgment, even for the guilty. The temple was to be built there.

David, therefore, orders everything from this to the end of the book, in view of the temple that was to be built, and the son that was to build it. All from this, however, is the preparation for his departure and for this work that was to be done by the son—that could not be left to David—but it is not Solomon that prepares for the house, but David. David and Solomon give us the two grand truths as to Christ—Christ both. In man it must be separate; in man we see the difference. But still it is beautiful to see that it is not Solomon that arranges all; it is the wisdom of David. And so it will be with Christ. It is not merely that Christ will be the wisdom of God by-and-by, or the power of God by-and-by; but Christ *is* the power of God—*is* the wisdom of God—Christ viewed as the crucified One, which is precisely the way in which the Apostle Paul speaks of the Lord in contrast with the wisdom of man. David, therefore, arranges everything beforehand for the temple, the house of God.

And it is a remarkable thing—as I may just observe—that the house is always supposed to be one and the same house. Even that striking passage in Haggai (2:9), which is given so confusedly in our common Bibles, preserves the same thought. It is not "the glory of this *latter house*," but "the *latter glory* of this house." It is viewed as the same house from the beginning to the end. No doubt Assyrians or Babylonians may ravage and destroy; no doubt the Romans may even plow up the very foundations; but it is the same house in God's mind. So complete do we see the line of God's purpose. God ignores these dreadful clouds that have gathered over the house from time to time; but when the day comes by-and-by for the glory to dwell in the land, it will be the house of God—so regarded all through. Anti-christ even may have been there before, but it is the house of God; and the latter glory of the house shall be greater than the

former. The "latter glory" is clearly when the Lord Jesus returns by-and-by. There was a preliminary accomplishment when He came to the house on His first advent; but the full meaning will be when He shakes the heavens and earth which are connected with this glory of the latter house; and this will only be when He comes again.

Well then David prepares all with a view to what was to be built by his son. "And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight; also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David. And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for Jehovah must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death. Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for Jehovah God of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of Jehovah my God: But the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto My name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in My sight. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for My name; and he shall be My son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever." You see the purpose of God. So he explains that this was the reason why, as he was not to build, he nevertheless was permitted to prepare. David would sow; Solomon was to reap. The details of this arrangement are given us in the next chapter to the end.



## I Chronicles 23-29

"So when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel. And he gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites." Chap. 23:1, 2. And a remarkable act of David's appears here, quite in consistency with what we have seen before. He first numbers the Levites; and he numbers them according to Moses, from thirty years old and upward. But even Moses himself gives us a modification of this; namely, from twenty-five years. David goes further. He is the king, and all now depends upon the king. Hence (v. 24), "These were the sons of Levi after the house of their fathers; even the chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of Jehovah, from the age of twenty years and upward."

Thus David showed sovereign right to act for Jehovah. He only did so because he is the type of Christ. There was One greater than Moses that was in the view of the Spirit of God, and David typifies Him. It is said, "For, by the last words of David, the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above: because their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of Jehovah." No doubt their duties were greatly enlarged; and, great as their numbers might be now, the magnificence of the temple would call for every man from twenty years. And, besides, David would give them all a place in it. It was an honor as well as a duty, and so one can conceive grace acting in calling in the younger men.

In the 24th chapter we have the divisions of the sons of Aaron, and they are now divided into twenty-four courses. Zadok takes his place as the high priest, and this we know will be the line when the Lord Jesus comes to reign by-and-by. It is not only that the house of David will enjoy its right and glory according to the word of Jehovah, but the family of Zadok will be actually in the administration of the priesthood in that future day of blessedness on the earth. This we know from

the book of Ezekiel, who expressly lets us see that so it will be (chap. 44:15). "But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near to Me to minister unto Me, and they shall stand before Me to offer unto Me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord Jehovah." We can see the reason of this. They were faithful. But there is another reason, too, that does not appear in the prophecy. They were the proper descendants. They were the lineal descendants of Phinehas; and God had sworn in the wilderness (so far did it go back beyond David) that there should be an everlasting covenant with the priesthood and the family of Phinehas. If God remembers His promises, so does He not forget His covenant with man. It is not, therefore, the promise to the fathers only; but even what may come in because of the fidelity of His people in any great time of trouble is never forgotten of the Lord.

In the 25th chapter we have the service of song. "Moreover, David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals." It is called "prophesying" because it so directly brought in God, which is the emphatic meaning of prophesying. "And the number of the workmen according to their service was" — so and so. There were twenty-four courses of the singers. Now, this was another remarkable change. In the tabernacle, song was not the characteristic feature, but sacrifice; but in the temple in the day of glory, the song of triumph is the new and suitable feature. It is not but what the sacrifices abide, as we find; and so they will be on the earth — no longer, as they were, mere legal offerings, but commemorations — commemorations of the great sacrifice, no doubt. God will condescend to use for an earthly people an earthly sign. The heavenly people need none. That is the reason why we have no sacrifices now — because we see what the sacrifice of Christ is in the mind of heaven. We enjoy heaven's estimate of Christ. Hence, as there is no sacrifice in heaven, we have none; but, when the earth comes in, the earthly people will have earthly sacrifices.

In the 26th chapter we have the porters, for it is a part of

majesty to think of what is least. The Spirit of God condescends to arrange by David for the porters, just as truly as He did for the high priest, or for the different courses of priesthood. All has its place, and whatever has to do with the service of God is great in God's eyes. Indeed, it is only we who make so much of the differences between great and small. To God, the smallest thing has a value.

In the 27th chapter we have more the kingdom in its outward regulations. "Now the children of Israel, after their number, to wit, the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, and their officers that served the king in any matter of the courses, which came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year, of every course were twenty and four thousand." We find the number twenty-four whether it be actual, or in its thousands, very prominent here. Twelve is the number devoted to perfection in human government — in government by man. In the Church, seven, because it is spiritual administration. In Israel, twelve — twelve tribes, not seven. So here in the kingdom by-and-by; only there is a double witness of it. It is twenty-four. Nothing was established when it was only twelve. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." The Millennium will be the great establishment of the kingdom. And so we have not perfection. Perfection will be in eternity, but still there will be establishment.

The end of the chapter shows us the various ministers of the king — the rulers of his substance — those that were over the king's treasures — those that were over the work of the field, his agriculture, his vineyards, his domains as we would call them, the sycamore trees, and so on, the olive yards, the herds, the camels, flocks, asses, and the other chief ministers of the king.

In the 28th chapter we have the assembly of the princes, where David stands and addresses them, although he was now drawing near the close. "As for me," he says, "I had in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, and for the footstool of our God." This was a great word which it is well to dwell upon for a moment. "A house of rest for the ark." It was not so in the wilderness. It was

either "Rise up, O Jehovah," or "Return." It was always motion — motion actually, or motion in prospect. But the blessed feature of the day that is coming will be rest — rest after toil — rest after sorrow. And this will be the fruit of the suffering of the true Son of David. We see it beautifully in the 132nd Psalm, where David, who has been afflicted, prays for Solomon. And Solomon will bring in the rest, but only as a sign. True rest is yet to come. "There *remaineth* a rest for the people of God." This is not yet accomplished; it will be in due time.

David, then, here looks forward to the ark of the covenant of Jehovah having a house of rest. "But," says he, "God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for My name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. Howbeit Jehovah, God of Israel, chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for He hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father He liked me to make me king over all Israel." He had given him a good work. He was not to build the house; but he, above all, had the preparation of the material and the ordering of it, even when it was built — not Solomon, but David. Solomon carried out the regulations of David. Therefore, whatever may be the future glory of the kingdom, we must remember that the sufferings of Christ morally take an incomparably higher place. David was more important than Solomon. Solomon was only the fruit, so to speak, of David. The glory of the kingdom was only the result of the one who had glorified God as the outcast and rejected one, but the real establisher, of the kingdom. Then he says, "And He said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build My house and My courts: for I have chosen him." David therefore gives to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch and of the houses.

We see how completely David is the source of everything here. "The pattern of all that he had by the Spirit." It was not any question of his own will. "And the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of Jehovah, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things. Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of Jehovah, and for all the vessels

of service in the house of Jehovah." Nay, more than that, he gave by weight of the gold for the various vessels, and the silver for those that were to be made of silver — the tables, for instance; "also pure gold for the fleshhooks and for the bowls, and the cups." Everything was to a nicety arranged by David. "All this, said David, Jehovah made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern." It was really God arranging all by His servant. On this ground David charges Solomon. "Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for Jehovah God, even my God, will be with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of Jehovah." It was the great prospect of David's declining years. It was not his own house, but Jehovah's house. He had no doubt about his own; he was not troubled about it; he did not think about it. He prays God for it; he could rest upon God's word. God would surely establish the house of David, but David looked for the building of the house of Jehovah. David could not rest without God being glorified, and he desired at any rate to have his own part. And God gave him a good part — not the building, but all things gathered in view of it, and ordered too.

The last chapter (29) gives us the final charge of David. In this he fully states how he had prepared with all his might for the house of his God. "Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colors, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house" — that is, it was not only what he drew from the kingdom, but what he gave of his own personal property and estate — "even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal."

And now, in the face of this, he asks, "Who is willing to consecrate his service this day unto Jehovah?" The noble generosity of the king acts powerfully upon the people. "Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly, and gave for the service of the house of God, of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And they with whom precious stones were found, gave them to the treasure of the house of Jehovah, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite." All this is enumerated with the greatest care. "Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to Jehovah: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy."

Thus we see how grace draws out grace, and how much deeper the joy of David was over God's glory than over anything of his own. We never hear of anything like such an expression of joy for what befell himself. "Wherefore David blessed Jehovah before all the congregation." It is the king, not the priest, now, but the king. "And David said, Blessed be Thou, Jehovah God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Jehovah, and Thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name." "But who am I?" says he, for there is nothing that produces so much humility, such true sense of nothingness, as the rich blessing of Jehovah. "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." So he prays for Solomon. "O Jehovah God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of

the thoughts of the hearts of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee: and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes."

Then he calls the congregation to bless Jehovah; and so they all do, bowing down their heads in worshipping Jehovah and the king. The king, you see, is now the proper representative of Jehovah. And they sacrifice according to the greatness of the day. "Even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel: and did eat and drink before Jehovah on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time."

"The second time." Not a word is here introduced about Adonijah's attempt to get the kingdom. It was all left out. The troubles and sins of the house of David are left out, unless they are bound up with some purpose of God. That is the key to it; but here is given simply the result; namely, that Solomon is anointed the second time. The first time was after the house was determined upon. Solomon was bound up with the glory of the house. "Then Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah" — a remarkable expression — "sat on the throne of Jehovah as king, instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him. And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king. And Jehovah magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel."

"Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. And the time that he reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead."

## II Chronicles 1-2:3

We have seen that the first book of Chronicles has for its great object the setting aside of the fleshly choice of man in the kingdom for the man of God's choice — David. Nevertheless there was a purpose of God brought out by David's request to build the house of Jehovah. God meant it for another very near to David, but who was not David — not for him who had served Him so faithfully in suffering, but for the son about to reign in glory. The second book of Chronicles accordingly shows us the son come to the throne, and the temple accordingly built. But although there was this difference between David and his son — the combined types of our Lord Jesus Christ in His sufferings and His glory — nevertheless, we should greatly err if we supposed that David had not before God a better portion than his son. Faith is better than its own results, and if we could have heaven without the pathway of faith upon earth, we should never be so blest as we hope to be. It is here that we know God as none in heaven ever can know Him. When we go to heaven, we shall not lose this, but have it in its perfection. Thus God gives us the best place everywhere — the best place on earth, the best place in heaven — and this not because we deserve anything, but because Christ does.

But it is Christ suffering first, and this has the priority. First must He suffer, and then must He be raised from the dead. His glory is the consequence of His sufferings. I do not speak, of course, of His personal external glory. That is another thing. I speak of the glory that He takes as *man*, for this is what brings us in, although it could not have been, had He not been God. But still, what belongs to God in itself, is incapable of being a matter of gift to man. It is impossible for anyone to become God. Jesus was God. He was God as the Word before He was the Man Christ Jesus—God from eternity to eternity. But here we are speaking of the type of the Lord as man and as king — in this, too, son — the son of the true



beloved. But then it was David (which means "beloved"), not Solomon. Solomon was the man of peace that flowed from the special object of Jehovah's love. Hence, therefore, as David enjoyed the love of God and His complacency in a way that Solomon did not, in a deeper and fuller way, in his sorrows and sufferings upon the earth in the path of faith, so also did David own God and cleave to God in a deeper way than Solomon ever did. This was remarkably shown by what we see in the earlier verses of this second book of Chronicles.

The ark characterizes David; the brazen altar, Solomon. The difference is manifest. The ark was what no human eye saw, but it was nearest to God. The brazen altar was a great sight. It was there that the thousand bullocks were sacrificed. It was there that the people could witness a great and holy sight. But still, the one was before the people; the other was before God. This makes a mighty difference; and you will find just the same difference now between two Christians, one of whom is spiritual and the other unspiritual. It is not that they do not both love the Lord Jesus, for he is no Christian who loves Him not. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." But although there be no difference, at bottom, in the fact of love, still there is a very great difference in the measure of it; and the grand difference shows itself in this — that the unspiritual man loves the Lord because of what He is to him; the spiritual man appreciates what He is to God. This is no loss to himself, but very great gain, because what we are before God is very much more than what we are before men.

Hence, therefore, the ark was very dear to David — much dearer than his throne. Solomon, I have no doubt, greatly valued his throne; but he valued also the altar of God. I say not that he did not value the ark, but after all it is "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"; and when we find men occupied with any one thing more than another, we may be sure that that object has the heart, because we are always characterized by what we seek. And hence the importance of our words. So the Lord teaches in the 12th of Matthew. Our words, if we are honest, are the expression of the mind. I do not speak of dishonest people; but when people are sincere —

and it is hoped that Christians, at any rate, seek with all their hearts thus to be — the mouth discloses the state of the heart; and therefore when we speak of ourselves, it is evident what is before us. When we are filled with the Lord Jesus, the mouth will not fail in its testimony; but it is the appreciation of Christ in His nearness to God rather than in His immediate bearing upon ourselves that marks the difference between spirituality and the want of it.

“And so Solomon went up thither to the brazen altar before Jehovah which was at the tabernacle of the congregation” (1:6) — just as the ark was brought up to the place which David had prepared for it — “and he offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it.” There all the congregation met God. It was the place of approach to God — not the place where God revealed Himself, but the place where man approached as near as he could to God. Nevertheless, God owns this, for it was good, though it was not the best — not the more excellent way.

“In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father.” Just as Moses and Joshua make up a compound type of Christ in the beginning of the history, so David and Solomon, now when the kingdom is set up. He therefore lays all the stress upon David.

“And hast made me to reign in his stead. Now, O Jehovah God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for Thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this Thy people, that is so great?” This was excellent. He did value the people; and he valued the people not because they were his people, but because they were God’s people. It makes all the difference now.

Suppose in our relationship to the Church of God we regard any people as our people, we shall always be jealous about them — always be afraid of their listening to anybody but ourselves — always be anxious to mold and fashion their opinions according to our own, perhaps very narrow, minds. At any rate, no man — I care not how great — no man contains

all the gifts; and this is not the order of God for His Church. The principle of God is directly the contrary. All things are ours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas; and therefore anything that hinders the action of all the gifts that God gives for God's people is false in principle; and God's people ought to hold themselves not only free, but bound to seek profit from all that God gives for their good, because they *are God's people*. They do not belong to any man. It matters not how owned and honored of God he might be, still the more honored the more he would feel they are God's people.

And this is the very point that Peter so earnestly presses. It is rather badly given in our version. I will just draw attention to it for a moment. In the last chapter of his first epistle, Peter says to the elders, "Feed the flock of God." That is the point that keeps us right. They are God's flock, and we must take care what we do with God's flock. We must take care that we have a right mind and a right object as to God's flock. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind; neither as being lords" — not "over God's heritage." You observe the word "God's" is put in by the translators. It does not mean God's heritage at all. The flock is God's flock, but the point in the third verse is not at all that question, but what they were *not* to do. They were to feed the flock of God. That is the positive side. But here we have the negative side. "Neither as lording it over *their own* heritage" would be really the idea; that is, not treating it as a thing belonging to them — "neither as being lords over their own belongings" — if I may paraphrase the verse — "but as being ensamples to the flock." That is, they were not to treat them as their own. This gives the force of the exhortation to the elders. They were to feed them as God's flock; they were not to lord over them as their own belongings — their own heritage.

Now, Solomon entered into this in his measure. He did not regard the people as his people, his to govern, his to serve God in, but God's people entrusted to him. This gives seriousness; and, further, it exercises conscience. So he asked for wisdom, for surely he needed it. Had it been his own people, he might have had wisdom enough; but, being God's people, he

required wisdom from God; and therefore this is what he asked—not wealth or length of years. So God, accepting this request of Solomon's heart, says, "Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honor, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge My people, over whom I have made thee king."

How wonderful the grace of God! "My people." He was not ashamed of it. We shall see how poor and failing they were, but they were God's people. Then it was a question of an earthly people—now of a heavenly—and our responsibility is as much greater than Israel's as the heavens are above the earth. I mean that, as to our place now, we are put on a different rule—under a different *regime* altogether!—"wisdom and knowledge are granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like."

And hence, therefore, we find that the Apostle feels the need of a new kind of wisdom; and God grants it and gives it, not merely to him; but we all need it, each in his place and for his mission. And where is that wisdom, and what? "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Hence, therefore, we have got a wholly different kind of wisdom. Solomon's wisdom was exercised from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grew on the wall. It was of the earth; it had to do with the human heart as well as all objects that were here below. And so we find it most divinely exercised in the book of Proverbs, which is a matchless collection of divine wisdom in earthly things. But it is another kind of wisdom that *we* find, now that Christ has been revealed and has taken His place in heaven, because the question is not what suits the earth, but what suits heaven—what suits the Lord Jesus glorified at the right hand of God. The Church is the body of Christ at the right hand of God.

"Then Solomon came from his journey to the high place that was at Gibeon to Jerusalem from before the tabernacle of the congregation, and reigned over Israel. And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hun-

dred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, which he placed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem. And the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones, and cedar trees made he as the sycamore trees that are in the vale for abundance." There was the grandest witness of magnificence that ever was found in any city upon earth. Not even Augustus's finding Rome brick and making it marble, was to be compared with Solomon. "And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. And they fetched up and brought forth out of Egypt a chariot for six hundred shekels of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so brought they out horses for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, by their means."

That is, we find everything here related, but not so as to manifest his faults. We know very well that these horses, and, above all, the multiplying of his wives, became a great snare to Solomon; but the object of Chronicles is not to mention the king's responsibility and the ways in which he broke down, so much as to bear witness to his being the witness of God's purpose. In Kings, as I have already shown, we have the question of responsibility; in Chronicles, of divine counsel. That is the difference between the two books. They are not a mere repetition of each other. There is a sensible difference in the way in which even the same events are recorded; but this was not the will of man, but really the power of God, and God's wisdom. And as David was hindered from the thought of his heart in building a temple, which was reserved for Solomon, so the Spirit of God soon lets us know that the grand point for which Solomon indeed reigns was the building of Jehovah's house. "And Solomon determined to build an house for the name of Jehovah, and an house for his kingdom. And Solomon told out threescore and ten thousand men to bear burdens, and fourscore thousand to hew in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred to oversee them. And Solomon sent to Hiram the king of Tyre, saying, As thou didst deal with David my father, and didst send him cedars to build him an house to dwell therein, even so deal with me." Chap. 2:1-3.

So it will be in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus by-and-by.

He, the head of Israel, will make use of the Gentiles; and the Gentiles, represented here by the king of Tyre, will bring of all their means, their wealth, their glory, in allegiance to the King of kings and Lord of lords. But it would be a great mistake to confound the character of that day with the principle of this. I know there are many dear children of God who think that it is for the glory of God to have architecture of a grand and imposing description, and music of the finest character to please the ear, and all things accordingly; but this is really the Jewish method of honoring God, and not the Christian one. On the contrary, that which is proper to us is prayer and singing in the Spirit and in the understanding; and whatever is not characterized by the Holy Ghost, and is not taken up directly by the Spirit to witness for the Lord Jesus Christ — whatever is not of faith now — is a total failure.

Hence, mere imagery to represent truth, although an admirable thing in Jewish days, is altogether out of season in the present. It is going back to the nursery after we have attained our majority. It is playing at children again in divine things, which was exactly what the children of Israel were. They were in their minority, and they had the picture books that were suitable for the nursery. It was God's nursery then, but it is a great mistake to go back to the nursery now; and this is exactly the mistake of ritualism in every form and in every measure. It is the greatest blunder to suppose that, because a thing is in the Bible, therefore it is always of the same authority. If that were the case, we ought to offer our he-goats and our bullocks much more; for there was, after all, a much more important witness to the sacrifice of Christ in these than in any other portion of the Jewish economy, as, indeed, they were before it. They were not merely the temporary institution of Israel; they were practiced by the faithful ever since sin came into the world. There would be very much more plausible ground, therefore, for an argument in favor of material sacrifices than for the mere splendor of the temple, or even the more modified show of the tabernacle. But the truth is, for us the true holy place is in the heavens; and it is, therefore, through the rent veil that we draw nigh, if we draw nigh to God at all; and any thought of an earthly holy place or sanc-

tuary is a retrogression from Christianity to Judaism. I mention this because it is of all practical importance; and no Christian ought, therefore, to shrink from fairly looking at these things in the face. Is it not true? Is it not the very object of the Holy Ghost to bring even the Jews out of this? — not to lead the Gentiles back into it. Ritualism is the reversal of the instruction of the epistle to the Hebrews. It is apostasy in fact — apostasy from the truth of God that is revealed there — and therefore I hold that ritualism is not a mere harmless power. Nor do I at all agree with those that say, Well, I can worship God as well in a cathedral as in a hut. I answer that I cannot worship Him at all where show suited to the world is the object, and that wherever I can be in unison with the crucified and rejected Saviour is the true place for a man of faith.

## II Chronicles 2:4-3

Now, Solomon represents a wholly different state of things; and persons may ask, Then is there no type here? To be sure there is, but it is not the type of Christianity. It is the type of the millennial kingdom; it is the type of what God is going to do. And if persons were to say to me, Do you mean to say that there will never be anything grand for this world? is all the world to be only for the devil — only for unbelief and flesh? I say, No, I maintain what God means; and there I differ entirely from my good friends the dissenters in this particular — that they do not look for this future dealing of God for the earth. They regard the present as being the closing term of God with the world. Now I believe the contrary. I believe that the present time is God's calling a people for heaven — calling a people on heavenly principles for Christ, founded on the cross, who are waiting for the glory. These are the two terms of Christian existence. Our starting point is the cross, and our terminus is the glory of the Lord Jesus. We are bound by, and we are now between, those two points. We are strangers and pilgrims. The cross has separated us from the world, and we are waiting for the Lord to bring us into His own heavenly abode — the mansions in the Father's house.

But when the Lord comes and takes the Church, has He done with everything? Is that all? Does not God mean to bless the world? Does not He mean to bless Israel? Does He not mean to bless the nations? I am sure of it. It is not to me a question at all. Persons may say, Well, we must not be too bold; we must not be too confident of what we do not know. But I think we ought to be confident of what we know, and I do not expect persons to be confident of what they do not know. On the contrary, I advise them not to be. Yet I suppose that every Christian is confident about something. Is he not confident of his own sins, to begin with? Is he not confident of the Saviour? Very



well, then he cannot speak too boldly of both, for I do not sympathize with those that are very sure of salvation and do not feel their sinfulness. I think it is a dangerous kind of confidence.

If I am true before God in the feeling of my sins, I am privileged to be equally sure of the blessedness of my salvation, because He is a Saviour for the lost; and I cannot exaggerate either. But if you admit that principle as to so all-important a thing as the sins that expose you to hell, and the salvation that will bring you to heaven — if we are confident about that, we might well be confident about anything. There is nothing so hard as that — nothing. There is nothing that required such an immense conquering of difficulties as the delivering us from hell and the bringing us to heaven; and Jesus has undertaken both, and will as surely as He has accomplished the one, so the other.

But there must be an immense gap in the thoughts of any Christian — I care not who he is, or what — if he thinks that the Lord is merely going to bring people out of the world to heaven. Has He made the world for nothing? Was the world made merely to be the football of Satan? Is it merely the sport of the enemy of God? No, He means to wrest this world from the enemy's grasp, and He means to make this world a happy world; for the poor political quacks of the world have proved their total futility, and their inability to remedy the present state of disorder. He is the true physician in every sense, and the great wonder-worker; and He will heal the world of all its plagues and evils that are now showing themselves, as we know, to be incurable distempers, but not so to Him. The mischief is not that man cannot heal them, but that man pretends to heal them; for I quite admit that it is no disrespect to any man to say that he cannot heal this poor sin-stricken world. No doubt about it, but the pretension to do it is bad, and that is just where man shows his folly — pretending to do what only God can, and what God does through the suffering of His own Messiah.

Here is the joy to me — that this glorious state of the world by-and-by is not to be apart from the cross any more than Solomon is from David. Solomon reigns in David's stead, and

the reign of Solomon is the necessary complement of the sufferings of David. The two are bound up together in the most remarkable manner, and give us this complete type which I have been endeavoring to show. But then it is the type not of a people taken up to heaven after suffering upon earth, but the type of the power and glory of God that will shine from the heavens upon the earth. And therefore you see the true answer to people who reason. And it has always been a great question among theologians whether the future state of blessedness is to be on the earth which is to be metamorphosed or sublimated into a heavenly state, or whether the people of God in their risen condition are to be in heaven.

Now, I say both are true — not exactly that the earth will ever become heaven, but that all the saints that have suffered from the beginning of the world till the Lord returns, from Abel downward, will be a heavenly people. And therefore it is quite a mistake to suppose that because now the Church is heavenly in its calling, therefore the saints that are departed will not be heavenly too. It was true, the heavenly calling was not revealed to them; and they were not blest, as we are, with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. But they are the saints of the high places; they are the saints of the heav- enlies too. They shall judge the world; they shall judge angels, just as truly as we. They will be caught up to meet the Lord, and we shall be with them, and they with us, in the presence of God. I do not mean to say that there will be no distinctions. That, again, is another mistake; but I maintain that this is the truth of Scripture most plainly.

But then God means to convert Israel, and this is the reason for which Israel is now kept — kept in spite of their unbelief, kept in spite of their hostility. They are the great fomenters of all infidelity. There is hardly a wicked thought of modern infidels, no matter who they may be, but what is but the evolution of the old infidelity of Spinoza and other infamous Jews of past days. The Jews have always been the keenest and the subtlest weavers of the web of infidelity. Well now, in spite of all that, God watches over them. They are in the house — the city of refuge.\* They are not permitted to be destroyed, although they deserve it. The avenger of blood must have des-

troyed them otherwise. They are kept there till "the death of the high priest which is anointed with . . . oil." When the Lord leaves His present place of priest in heaven — when He terminates that character of priesthood which He now occupies — then the blood-stained one will return to the land of his possession. That is the future that is for Israel by-and-by. There will no doubt be a sifting out of the guilty. There will be not only the manslayer that is innocent of murder by the grace of God, but there will be the murderer that will be put to death, because there will be a judgment. He will stand before the congregation for judgment. The Lord will destroy some of those murderers — kill them before His face, as it is said in the Gospel. They are to be slain before Him. But others grace will count, because they are converted, and because they confess their sin. Grace will justify them. This is the double type of the one guilty, and the other not, who might be in the city of refuge.

I refer to this here because it is so intimately connected with the subject of this book — the type of the kingdom, the grand kingdom that the Son of David will bring in in that day for the earth. And there is the grand mistake of Popery, for instance, in using all these scriptures for the Church now. These scriptures suppose power — suppose the exercise of earthly righteousness, as I shall show presently. That is not the character of the Church. The character of the Church is to be persecuted, not to exercise power. The character of the Church is to have heavenly and not earthly glory; so Popery has been guilty of the greatest possible departure from it. But not Popery only. It is a natural snare to the heart, because natural people like to be comfortable in this world; people like to be something. No wonder. It is exactly what the heart would covet, and this is what requires a great deal of faith to judge and to refuse.

Well then, Solomon is seen here not only at the head of Israel, but also controlling the Gentiles and making use of them as the servants of these great purposes; and so he demands timber in abundance. "Even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build [shall be] wonderful great. And, behold, I will give to thy servants, the hewers that

cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil."

Then in the 3rd chapter. "Solomon began to build the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where [Jehovah] appeared unto David his father in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite." v. 1.

There again you observe the link. The glory is built upon the suffering. It was there that the sacrifice was offered; it was there that the destroying angel's hand was stayed. It was on mount Moriah. It was there, too, on the threshing-floor of the Gentile, because there must be that link. You see, it was by the hands of lawless men that the Jews crucified their own Messiah. And, accordingly, it was on the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, the enemy that had been in possession of Jerusalem. We find the wonderful wisdom of God which marks this type. So the house, then, is prepared with all magnificence; but into all its details I do not pretend to go.

It is always a great thing, in looking at Scripture, never to go beyond what you know. That gives you firmness, because a person who pretends to know more than he does, must, after all, if he is an honest man, admit it to some extent. He can hardly pretend to honesty if he disguises it. But it is a great thing not to go beyond our measure, because then we can speak distinctly; whereas, otherwise, at the very best we must be somewhat ambiguous, or — what is a very great fault in dealing with the Word of God — rash. Oh, it is a serious thing to impute to God what God does not say, and to run the risk of making the God of truth appear a liar. And so it must be, where men guess instead of waiting to learn; but then we must always *wait* to learn, and I believe that where we have the faith to wait God will give us to learn.

I abstain, therefore, purposely in this case from saying some things that I have a judgment about, but that are not necessary. There is only one point of deep interest that I will speak of, and that is the distinction between the cherubim here and the cherubim of the ark in the tabernacle. When the ark was brought into the temple here, the wings of the cherubim looked

out toward the house; that is, instead of looking "inward" — which is a mistake in our version — they really looked outward. In the tabernacle, on the contrary, the cherubs looked upon the blood that was upon the mercy seat. All their attention was occupied with that. The cherubim were the emblems of God's judicial authority. Now this is just exactly the difference. Righteousness now is so perfectly satisfied that it has no other task than to proclaim the greatness of the victory that Christ has won for us — no other work, as far as we are concerned, but to clothe us with the best robe. How precious for us! The righteousness of God is that which preserves, for no sword is in the hand there. In the garden of Eden the cherubs had a flaming sword. It was to guard and keep off man. But in the tabernacle the cherubs are simply the witnesses of what grace has done. They have nothing to do. They are *guarding*, not guarding man from it, but maintaining guard, as it were, even over the perfection of what grace has done for sinful man. But in the temple it is another thing. There the cherubs, or witnesses of the judicial power of God, look outward. It is now a question of righteous governing.

That is not the case now in the gospel. Righteousness does not govern. In the Millennium, righteousness will reign through grace. That is a totally different state of things. I do not mean as to the work of Christ, because that is the same work no matter when or where. The work of Christ is always grace reigning through righteousness. But I am speaking now of the character of the millennial reign; and I say that the great distinctive feature then will be not grace reigning, but righteousness. "A king shall reign in righteousness," and "princes are to rule in judgment." That is the point of it; and hence, therefore, as we see in this very case of Solomon, so he acted. It was on that principle that he slew Joab — on that principle also that he dealt with Shimei who had been spared during the time of David, the man of grace, the witness of grace. But under Solomon it could not be. It was perfectly right that they should die. It was not a mistake; it was a right thing; it was according to the principle that was then established; just as when the Lord Jesus was here upon earth, He said, "I am not come to destroy men's lives, but to save." But when He comes

in glory, He will destroy; and it will be as right then to destroy, as now it is His glory to save.

Hence, then, we must distinguish. If we do not do so, the Word of God will be a mass of confusion to us, or we shall make fearful confusion with it, which is exactly what people do. That is, they do not rightly divide the word of truth. Now, if we only understand the Scriptures, everything will be in its place — everything in its due season and order. That is what I am endeavoring to help Christians to by the suggestions that I am making upon these books; that is, to help them to apply rightly the precious Word of God, whether it be typical or anything else.

I say, then, that the cherubs look outward; they look to the house, and that is the great point. It is the old house, because it was the sign of the judicial power of God that was going everywhere throughout the earth with its center in Jerusalem. But God's power was now dealing from that center outside; and, although there was an inner circle of Israel, the circumference of blessing was the earth itself — I might say the universe, only we are here looking simply at the earth.

And further, let us note that there were two pillars, the sign of divine stability. This kingdom, when it shall be in the hands of the Lord Jesus, will not be a mere type, but a reality. It will never dissolve through the weakness of man. It shall not be left to others. Hence, therefore, as the witness of it, there were two pillars — Jachin and Boaz. These show as a figure, but only as a witness. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

\*The Jews who believed and were baptized on the day of Pentecost availed themselves of the provision of God's way of escape — the city of refuge. They saved themselves from the judgment hanging over the nation. Their land was defiled with innocent blood and bears the inscription, "Aceldama, that is the field of blood" unto this day. The Apostle Paul uses the same figure when he says, "we . . . who have fled for refuge" (Heb. 6:18). In another sense the unbelieving Jews are providentially preserved for future judgment; as when Cain had a mark put upon him, lest any finding him should kill him. Then when Christ comes out of heaven, having ceased to exercise His

Aaronic-type priesthood on high, He will come forth in His Melchisedec character of priesthood; and Israel will return to the land of their inheritance in peace and prosperity. The writer of these articles on Chronicles gives further exposition on the cities of refuge in his *Lectures on the Pentateuch*. —Editor of *Christian Truth*

## II Chronicles 4-6

So in the next chapter (4) we find all the appurtenances — the altar and the sea of brass, and the pots and shovels and basins — for everything has its place. And, further, all the golden vessels were made by Solomon. Hiram, a Gentile, might be entrusted with the outside vessels; but "Solomon made all the vessels that were for the house of God" (v. 19). They were under his own superintendence directly as it became him.

"Thus," it is said in chapter 5, "all the work that Solomon made for the house of Jehovah was finished: and Solomon brought in [all] the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God." v. 1.

And then comes the assembling of the elders of Israel and the bringing up of the ark, for that remains unchanged — "Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" — the grand central witness of the Lord Jesus. The ark of the tabernacle is the ark of the temple. The cherubs may differ, but not the ark itself. "And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of Jehovah unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy [place, even] under the wings of the cherubim: for the cherubim spread forth [their] wings over the place of the ark and the cherubim covered the ark and the staves thereof above. And they drew out the staves [of the ark], that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle: but they were not seen without. And there it is unto this day. [There was] nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put [therein] at Horeb, when Jehovah made [a covenant] with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt." vv. 7-10.

This is very striking. Aaron's rod was not there now; neither do we find the pot of manna, but only the tables of stone. Why this difference? Why do we find the former in the tabernacle, and not in the temple? The reason is the change from the



present dealings of God in grace, and the future dealings of God in judgment. The authority of God must govern now as always. The man that shrinks from the authority of God's Word is not born of God, for what are we born for but to obey? And if to obey, to obey whom but God? We may have our duty with our parents, with our sovereign, and the like, with all lawful authority; but whomsoever we obey, the great One that we have to obey is God Himself. And this gives us a limit, therefore, and shows us where we are not to obey. It is never right to disobey, save where we are to obey God rather than men — for there may be such a collision — and we must then take the consequence. The great point of the Christian is in everything to find the point of obedience. That is his place, and what is to govern. Hence, therefore, always, whether it is the heavenly people or the earthly with tables of stone, there must be the expression of God's authority over His people. They are found now, and they will be found in the kingdom; and the kingdom of God will be indeed a most grand expression of the authority of God over the earth, because the nation and kingdom that will not serve — that goes not up to Jerusalem, to the people and city of His choice — will be visited by His judgments. God will maintain righteousness all over the world. There will be only one Sovereign then; and although there may be different kings, they will be all the servants of God or they will be destroyed at once if they are not.

But it is a different state of things now. We have now to do with the authority of God. We must always have that in whatever shape it comes; and we have now the authority of God expressed in God's Word. But, further, there was the pot of manna, and there was the rod — the witness of the rejected Christ glorified; for that is the meaning of the hidden manna — Christ that came down in humiliation, that is now gone up glorified on high. That is what *we* know. You will understand why it could not be then. At that time He would have left the heavenly glory and taken the earth; and, therefore, there would be no sense in it then. This, then, is of importance. As the One who came down is the manna from heaven and went back to heaven, so the pot of manna is in the ark in the most holy place, in the sanctuary of God. Second, while Christ is there on high,

He is acting as the priest. And the rod of Aaron that budded was the witness of the unailing priesthood of Christ which alone can bear fruit. The other rods were powerless and lifeless. The human priest is good for nothing; but this divine priest — this Son of God that became man, and entered upon His priesthood on high — is good for everything; and so, accordingly, the stick or rod that was dead bore fruit at once. All fruitfulness then is inseparable from the priesthood of Christ, and there is nothing which destroys fruit to God more than the substitution of an earthly dead priest for the true living one in the presence of God.

Well, you observe, that is not the point now, because the Lord will then be taking His place as King. That will be a permanent one; and although I do not deny that He will be priest — for He is to sit as a priest upon His throne when He takes His place by-and-by — still He will be no longer a hidden one. It is no longer a rod hidden in the most holy place out of the sight of man. He will be then displayed. Every eye will see Him. We must leave room, therefore, for the different dispensations of God.

Then we find the glory of the house. The glory of Jehovah filled it, just as He filled it at the time when the priests were consecrated; for there is a remarkable analogy between these two events. When the high priest was consecrated, and the priests, then the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle; and now, when the king consecrates the house, the Jehovah-glory comes down again. I am referring, of course, to the 9th of Leviticus, and comparing it with this. How has that been accomplished? Why, it is true now, and the glory of the Lord fills the Church in connection with the priesthood of Christ as truly as it will fill the house of God by-and-by — the great center of Israel's worship under the King. In short, the glory of God is given in answer to priesthood as well as the kingdom or kingship.

What is the meaning of Pentecost? There we find God's coming down to dwell in connection with priesthood, just as, by-and-by, God will dwell in connection with the kingdom. The one is visible, it is true; the other is not so. There was a visible sign of Jehovah's presence in the Holy Ghost being given to

us, but of nothing more. But during the kingdom there will be a visible glory on mount Zion, and the world will know it. The most distant nations will hear of it. There will be a testimony everywhere of the glory of Jehovah in connection with the people that He blesses.

So, in the 6th chapter we have Solomon's grand outpouring of his heart to the Lord, in which he spreads before Jehovah this new state of things that he so well understood. "The king turned his face and blessed the whole congregation of Israel" — for it is not the priest now; it is the king. A remarkable change. In the previous days it was the priest. We too have the priest in these days; we have Christ. He is never called *our* King. It is a great mistake to speak of the Lord as our King. He is the King, but He is the King of Israel; He is the King of the nations. He is never called the King of the Church. King is not the relationship of the Lord to the Church or to the saint. The one verse in the 16th of Revelation that seems to give it, I have already explained. It means "king of nations," not of "*saints*"; and a very important error it is to be expunged. There is no doubt of it. There is not a scholar who knows anything at all about these matters who would not agree with me. But anyone — whether he is Roman Catholic, or Tractarian, or anything else — would agree with me in this; and he would not require to be told it because every scholar knows it. The notion of "king of *saints*" is very unscriptural; and it is a very important mistake because the proper notion of the relation of a king to his people is one of distance and of graduated ranks in the kingdom. The word "king" implies graduated ranks, all having their place and their measure of nearness or of distance; and, consequently, there are all kinds of relative distances among themselves.

That is not the case in the Church of God, because the least Christian is as much a member of Christ's body as the greatest. You see the fact of the membership of the body puts aside all these questions of relative or different distances. In the kingdom there will be these differences. And this is the reason why so many people misunderstand the Church of God. Take Scotland. That is a very Bible-reading people, and yet there is not a people in Europe that goes more wrong about "the King of the Church."

It was the great cry at the time that the Free Church came into existence. They thought that the matter which was in dispute at the time between them interfered with Christ's rights as King of the Church. That was the grand thing, and, as loyal men, they naturally stood up for the King. That was the idea. I do not say this because I do not sympathize with their fidelity. It is not that. I have the greatest sympathy with their fidelity; but they do not understand the vitality of our relationship to Christ. Our relationship is not that of a people to a king, but of members of a body to the Head of the body. Christ and the Church make one body, and that makes all the difference to the Christian, because it shows that we are brought into a new place altogether, and that this place is one not of relative, but of absolute nearness. That is the reason why Peter, where he is not speaking about the body at all, says that "Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." That is what puts aside earthly priesthood, because if I have an earthly priest between me and God I am not absolutely near; and if I am absolutely near, I have no earthly priest. And so the assertion of an earthly priesthood is absolutely contradicted by the assertion of the plain simple truth of the gospel. It is not that the Lord Jesus Christ is not entitled to command us, because the head governs the body. There is not a member of my body but what is governed by my head, much more than people are governed by a king or queen, because, I am sorry to say, they do not obey very heartily; and they are rather refractory at the present day. But that is not the case with the members of the body; they must obey. And so it is with Christ and the Church. The obedience is one of the most intimate kind. The Spirit of God is given to maintain that union between the Head and the body.

However, I do not mean to illustrate it more. It is enough at the present time to refer to it. It is a very important practical matter, for you will find that if you give up as your grand thought in your relationship that you are a member of Christ's body, and sink into the place of a people governed by the king, you will get into distance; you will get into earthly thoughts of it. You will, practically, become a Jew instead of a Christian, because that is the relationship of the Jew. But the relationship

of a Christian is a totally different one; and the substitution of the Jewish relationship for the Christian one, unconsciously Judaizes the Church instead of preserving us in our own proper relationship to God. And I suppose that all here are aware that the accomplishment of our duty always depends upon our relationship — always depends upon the sense and attention that we give to our relationship. For instance, a wife has a totally different relationship from a daughter or from a mother; and each person does his own duty only as he is true to his own relationship. There is the great moment of it, and I do most earnestly entreat every Christian to search and see in the Word of God whether these things be not so.

Well, then, Solomon blesses the whole of the congregation of Israel, and all of them stood. "And he said, Blessed [be] Jehovah God of Israel, who hath with His hands fulfilled [that] which He spake with His mouth to my father David, saying, Since the day that I brought forth My people out of the land of Egypt I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that My name might be there; neither chose I any man to be a ruler over My people Israel: but I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name might be there; and have chosen David to be over My people Israel." Chap. 6:4-6.

He recounts how God had chosen from the beginning, and how as He chose Jerusalem, and not any other city, to be the metropolis; so also He chose David's house and no other family, and of David's family He chose Solomon himself. Everything depends upon the election of God; there is nothing good that is not founded upon God's election — nothing. The whole blessedness and strength of the believer depends upon it; and that is what delivers a person from self. I do not mean by that, that one ought to put election before an unconverted soul. Far from it. That would be, indeed, to add to his misery, if he feels his misery. But the moment a soul receives Christ, then I can tell him that he is the chosen of God; and an immense strength and encouragement it is to his heart that he knows that it is not his own will, else it would be weak; and it is not his own choice, else he might flatter himself that it was good, but that it was God's grace and God's election that accounts for his being brought who never deserved it.

Solomon, therefore, struck the right note when he touched this great point of election. And, on the other hand, he shows how God, having taken this house to dwell in, could be always prayed to — always looked to in every trouble. No matter what might be the sin or the affliction — whether it was personal or national — God was there to be prayed to. And so we find Israel did. Even if they were out of the land, they looked to it as a witness of this great truth. But just think of the folly of Christians taking up such things. Just think of the folly of a Christian turning to the east because a Jew did it, or doing anything else of the sort, just as if the God who is revealed to us is in the east more than any other spot of the earth. Never was there such insensate folly as that which has been prevalent in Christendom. No, we belong to heaven, and we look there if we look anywhere; but that, alas! is just where people do not look.

## II Chronicles 7-12

But in the next chapter (7), after he makes an end of praying, the fire comes down. For we read: "Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Jehovah filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of Jehovah, because the glory of Jehovah had filled Jehovah's house." And so there is nothing but worship according to their measure. "And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of Jehovah upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshiped, and praised Jehovah, [saying], For [He is] good; for His mercy [endureth] for ever. Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before Jehovah. And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen" — the nation was so very great that a thousand would not do now — "and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God."

And this was most admirable in its season. The admirable thing then for an earthly people was to pour out all the wealth of the earth at the feet of God. The admirable thing now for a heavenly people is to count whatever we have as nothing for the sake of Christ. That is, it is suffering now. As the Apostle Paul said, "What things were gain to me [as a Jew], I counted loss for Christ." He counted them dung; and not only did he so begin, but, as he adds, "and I do count them." He counted them so when he began, and he counted them so still. There is many a man that counts them so at first; but he begins to like them afterward. But it was not so with Paul — "I counted," and "I do count." It is a great thing to make a good start and to continue accordingly. So did Paul, but so has not done the Church of God. The Church of God began well, but where are we now?

So "Solomon finished the house of Jehovah, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of Jehovah, and in his own house, he prosperously affected." And then Jehovah appears to him again and confirms what he has done. "I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to Myself for a house of sacrifice." And so He not only says this, but "now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there for ever: and Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually." Now I take that as it plainly means. You will tell me, Well, the Gentiles are there now; some of the most wicked of the Gentiles are there now. But faith can wait. It need not be in a hurry. "He that believeth shall not make haste," and, therefore, as sure as God has spoken it, Jerusalem will be recovered — not by foolish crusaders, not by the power of man, but by the power of God. He means to have the glory to Himself. The whole idea of the crusades was a fundamental mistake from beginning to end, and arose from Christians fancying that they were Jews, taking the place of God's people and, consequently, denying Israel's place. The greatest enemies the Jews had were those same crusaders who fought against the Turks. The place of the true Christian is the very contrary. We ought to be the shelter of the Jew; we ought to be a sort of city of refuge to the Jew, till the day comes for the Jew to enter upon his heritage. We ought always to plead the rights of Israel as we know the wrongs of Israel. We ought to mourn deeply the unbelief of Israel; but, at the same time, we ought to protect them and show them all kindness "for the fathers' sake." The Church of God can afford to do so. If we were an earthly people, we might be a little jealous of those who are going to be put in the highest earthly places; but the heavenly people have no need for it. And that is what delivers Christians from foolish vanity in competing with the Gentile, and from jealousy as we think about the Jew.

So, the next chapter shows us Solomon after he had built all. Here we have the grand object of Solomon's coming to the throne. It was this great type of the kingdom. "And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, wherein Solomon had built the house of Jehovah, and his own house, that the cities which Hiram had restored to Solomon, Solomon built them, and



caused the children of Israel to dwell there. And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and prevailed against it. And he built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the store cities, which he built in Hamath. Also he built Beth-horon the upper, and Beth-horon the nether, fenced cities, with walls, gates and bars; and Baalath, and all the store cities that Solomon had, and all the chariot cities, and the cities of the horsemen, and all that Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and throughout all the land of his dominion. [As for] all the people [that were] left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which [were] not of Israel, [but] of their children, who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel consumed not, them did Solomon make to pay tribute until this day." Chap. 8:1-8.

Thus we have every kind of right exercised and the restoration of what had been wrong. "But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no servants for his work." A very remarkable statement. He made the Gentiles servants. The Jews will, then, be lords upon the earth, not slaves. The Gentiles will be obliged to take the place of the tail when Israel are at the head, according to the prophet. And all this beautiful order we find carried out socially and in a family order, and religiously, throughout the chapter.

But further (chap. 9), it was impossible that the fame of Solomon, the type of Christ, could be within such narrow bounds. The queen of Sheba herself comes, not merely to share in royal pomp — not merely to enter into what, alas! we know to be frivolous and most transient — but to hear the wisdom of Solomon. The Lord Jesus Himself singles her out. It was a queenly errand on which she came — most worthy — and indeed her rank gave the greater luster to it. But the object put additional luster on herself. She came to hear king Solomon, and she was in no way disappointed.

"When the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon" (that is the attractive object), "and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cupbearers also, and their apparel" (for even the least and lowest things bore the stamp of his royal grandeur) — "and his ascent

by which he went up into the house of Jehovah" — (for this was the grandest of all) — "there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, [It was] a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen; and behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: thou exceedest the fame that I heard. Happy [are] thy men, and happy [are] these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom." vv. 1-7.

That made a great impression upon her. "Blessed be Jehovah thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on His throne [to be] king for Jehovah thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made He thee king over them, to do judgment and justice."

This may seem somewhat strong; but we can, I think, appreciate the delight of God in tracing such a remarkable witness to the future glory of His own Son. No doubt it was true — most true — and what is divine will bear inspection. What is human fades the more we look into it. But the glory which God puts forth is the more seen to be perfect the more it is approached and understood. But still, for all that, whatever might be true of Solomon was only a shadow of Christ — of what Christ will be on the earth. Remember, I am not speaking of what is still higher. I admit that there is a deeper glory in the heavens; and we must carefully remember that the same millennial day will see the Church glorified in heaven, and the Jew blessed upon the earth, and the nations also. All will be under Christ. Consequently, it is not a question of their asserting heavenly glory exclusively, or earthly glory exclusively, but both, each in their own and for their object. That is the truth. And you will always find if you look at mistakes or at heresy (which is the same thing), that there is always a part of the truth, and that part is set against another part; but the full truth of God is never possessed about anything until it puts everything else in its place.

I am persuaded that what I have now said on the kingdom is the only right thought of it — that the kingdom, in short, according to our Lord's own intimation to Nicodemus, consists of heavenly things as well as earthly things. Nicodemus thought

only of the earthly things, and the Lord assured him that there must be new birth to possess even the earthly things. If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" It was useless. But there are heavenly things as well as earthly, and they are not confounded or changed into one another. The earthly does not become heavenly, nor does the heavenly become earthly. They are both separate parts; and that is the meaning of a very important scripture in the 1st of Ephesians — "That in the dispensation of the fulness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance." vv. 10, 11. There is the double order of the future inheritance. There are the heavenly things which we shall have, as risen from the dead and glorified with Christ; and there will be the earthly things, the head of which will be the Jews as the people of the Lord Jesus Christ; but the Church, which is His body, will share the heavenly things.

Then the rest of the chapter follows it up, for while the queen of Sheba gives the king a royal present suitable to her station and her means, the king, I need not say, was not to be behind her in nobleness of generosity; and the greatness of his throne is described, and the vastness of his shipping as well, and the abundance that was the result for all the people, even as it is said, he "made silver and gold in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar trees made he as the sycamore trees that are in the vale for abundance. And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt" and "he reigned over all the kings from the river unto the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt." You know that when Joshua has the word given at the beginning, the Euphrates is the extreme boundary. The Jordan was the proper one. Some of the tribes coveted what was on the other side, and so much the worse for them. They did not gain by it, but lost. But the Euphrates is the extreme limit, and that awaits the Lord Jesus.

In the next chapter (10) we find what, alas! is in all human types — failure. Rehoboam the king, the son of Solomon, inherits not his father's wisdom, but whatever was foolish and wrong in Solomon. For Rehoboam took counsel not with the men of experience who might have helped his youth, but with

the young men who only urged on his impetuosity. "He forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him that stood before him. And he said unto them, What advice give ye that we may return answer to this people, which have spoken to me, saying, Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us? And the young men that were brought up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou answer the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou [it] somewhat lighter for us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little [finger] shall be thicker than my father's loins. For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I [will chastise you] with scorpions. So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come again to me on the third day. And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men, and answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I [will chastise] you with scorpions" (vv. 8-14), according to his own foolish word; and the consequence was that God chastised him, for he rent away ten out of the twelve tribes and gave them over to his enemy Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.

Rehoboam would fight (chap. 11), but God hinders him. It was his fault, and it did not become him to fight. God never hindered the other kings, that I recollect, from fighting with Israel similarly; but Rehoboam must not fight. He that is guilty of a fault is not the man that can well or righteously reprove another. At any rate, he must be thoroughly brought down about his own fault before he is in a moral condition to do it. Rehoboam was, therefore, disciplined of the Lord in that his hands were tied and he was not permitted even to punish his rebellious subjects; but he has the sorrow of seeing his people leaving him, although there were the priests and Levites for a while, and faithful Israelites, who still resorted to Jerusalem to sacrifice there.

He was not left without some consolation from hearts in whom allegiance to the king shall not die away. "He loved

Maachah," it is said, "the daughter of Absalom, above all his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives, and three-score concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons and three-score daughters. And Rehoboam made Abijah, the son of Maachah, the chief, [to be] ruler among his brethren: for [he thought] to make him king. And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city: and he gave them victual in abundance. And he desired many wives." vv. 21-23.

"And it came to pass when Rehoboam had established the kingdom and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of Jehovah, and all Israel with him" (chap. 12) — for such is the manner of men, not so quick to follow in good, but so ready in evil. And so God sent an unexpected enemy upon him in the person of the king of Egypt, who took away the treasures that Solomon had amassed. Such was the righteous government of God, so that poor king Rehoboam was driven to make shields of brass instead of shields of gold, which were now being carried down into Egypt. "And when he humbled himself, the wrath of Jehovah turned from him that He would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well." How gracious of the Lord! Every little act of repentance brought its blessing.

## II Chronicles 13-20

Abijah follows (chap. 13), and he sets the battle in array against Jeroboam, and calls upon the men of Israel to follow. "But Jeroboam caused an ambushment," and, in consequence, we find Judah looking back; but they cried unto Jehovah, and He was with them; and "God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. And the children of Israel fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hand," in spite of all their prudent arrangements and their numerous host. "So there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men." The slaughter was prodigious; and not only so, but Abijah pursues his advantage and takes cities from them, so that Jeroboam never recovered strength again. Jehovah was against him.

Thus we see that God, after reproofing the fault of Rehoboam by tying up his hands, was pleased to judge the fault of Jeroboam with a complete destruction of his men of war — the very thing in which he prided himself. God's government is always righteous. I am speaking now of His providential ways; and, I say, they are always wise and good.

Then in chapter 14 we have Asa. "And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of Jehovah his God: for he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: and commanded Judah to seek Jehovah God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. And he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him. And he built fenced cities in Judah." And, further, we find that he was blest of God in his day of trial when the Ethiopians came against him. "And Asa cried unto Jehovah his God, and said, Jehovah, [it is] nothing with Thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power: help us, O Jehovah our God, for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Jehovah, Thou [art] our God; let not man prevail against Thee. So Jehovah smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the

Ethiopians fled. And Asa and the people that [were] with him pursued them into Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before Jehovah, and before His host; and they carried away very much spoil. And they smote all the cities round about Gerar; for the fear of Jehovah came upon them; and they spoiled all the cities; for there was exceeding much spoil in them."

Nevertheless, Asa has a warning from Azariah, who says, "Jehovah is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you. Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God and without a teaching priest, and without law. But when they in their trouble did turn unto Jehovah, God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found of them. And in those times [there was] no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations [were] upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity. Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded" (chap. 15). Asa takes courage from this for the time, and puts away still more of the abominations out of Judah and Benjamin. And, further, he even put down his mother from being queen — no doubt a most serious trial to the son, but she was an idolatress. "And Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burned it at the brook Kidron. But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless, the heart of Asa was perfect all his days." He was sincere, upright. "And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels."

But Asa's day of failure comes (chap. 16). When Baasha, king of Israel, came up against Judah, and built Ramah in order to hinder the Israelites from going up to the temple, Asa makes a league with Syria. He has recourse to Ben-hadad and says, "There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father; behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha, king of Israel, that he may depart from me." Ben-hadad accordingly stopped the building of Ramah by the king of Israel. "And at that time

Hanani the seer came to Asa, king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on Jehovah thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thy hand."

How remarkable is the government of God. Whatever wrong step we do to accomplish an end, not only does it not accomplish it, but it brings its own chastening with it. The very thing we least desire comes upon us. God would not only have hindered Israel, but Syria. Instead of this, the host of the king of Syria escaped out of his hands. The consequence was that, convicted of his folly as well as of his sin, Asa was wroth with the seer and put him in a prison house; and as one evil leads on to another, Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time. But God oppressed him, or, at any rate, chastised him, for he was diseased in his feet; and the same unbelief that sent him to Ben-hadad sent him now to men when he ought to have looked to Jehovah. We must remember that the grand point in Israel was that they had God to care for them. It was not like the case of men now who look to God to bless the means that are at hand; but in Israel there was a special testimony of God's being looked to in every trouble; and in this, Asa, although he had been a faithful man, failed seriously, and very solemnly too, at the close. I do not say that he was not a man of God, but I do say that there was great and grievous failure.

Jehoshaphat his son reigns (chap. 17). And here we find very beautiful grace and piety. I should say that piety more particularly is what characterizes this good son. He was a man, too, whose heart was toward the Lord. Jehoshaphat is established by Jehovah in the kingdom, and all Judah brought him presents; and he had riches and honor in abundance. But although all this is true, "His heart was lifted up in the ways of Jehovah: moreover, he took away the high places and groves out of Judah." Nevertheless, there was no removing of all the evil. There was a greater fidelity than had been found before. "And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of Jehovah with them, and went about through all the cities of Judah and taught the people." It was a very important thing. "And the fear of Jehovah fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah." There was a great moral effect produced.



Still there was, as we see in the next chapter (18), a feebleness in Jehoshaphat that showed itself in this way, that he made affinity not with Syria, but with Israel. This was a grievous sin in the sight of God; for although it was an enormous thing to form a league with the Gentiles offensive and defensive, it was a most serious thing to take ground with an idolater. I do not speak of making use of the Gentiles. That was right. But Israel stood in a peculiar position (with its golden calves set up in Bethel and Dan) so that Jehoshaphat's affinity with Ahab its king was in a certain sense more guilty than a league with Syria. Why? Because they were the people of God in an idolatrous state. It is just the same thing now in tampering with Romanism, because the gravamen of the guilt of Romanism is not merely because Romanists are idolaters, but because they are idolaters, professing Christ, and baptized in His name. That is what makes them much more guilty in the sight of God than any heathens who have not heard His name and glory.

So it is in this case then. Jehoshaphat having formed this league comes into nothing but trouble through it; though, apparently, there might be an outward prosperity. A messenger is sent to him (chap. 19) who warns him solemnly but in vain. He suffers the consequence of it. The king of Israel was smitten. The king of Judah returns and dwells at Jerusalem.

God, however, graciously met his faith when greatly tried, as we find in the 20th chapter, where the Moabites and Ammonites and others came; and a beautiful instance of the piety of faith is shown us here in this way — for I shall only mention one single feature in this mere sketch of these chapters. It is that in going forth they went singing the song of victory. It was not like the Greek who raised his paean to frighten the enemy; but here it was the piety that ventured and counted upon the Lord. How blessed is faith, in the people of God! The consequence need scarcely be told. "The children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy [them]; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another." So when the men of Judah came, there was nothing to do but to reap the fruits. And well might they call it the valley of Berachah — the valley of praise. "For there they blessed

Jehovah: therefore the name of the same place was called the valley of Berachah unto this day."

So then ends the course of Jehoshaphat with one solitary tale more; namely, the attempt to join with "Ahaziah, king of Israel, who did very wickedly. And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: And they made the ships in Ezion-gaber. Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, Jehovah hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, and they were not able to go to Tarshish (chap. 20:35-37).

What a contrast with Jehoshaphat's going forth and the victory made ready to his hand by the Lord God. And this is all instructive to us. May the Lord keep us true to His name and glory!

## II Chronicles 21-25

We have seen, then, the sad fruits of a pious man's joining himself with one who is untrue to God — a union which always turns to God's dishonor and the injury of him who loves God, as we find in Jehoshaphat himself. And this, too, not merely that he united with Ahaziah, but where he united even for commercial purposes — one of the most important points for a saint, not only for a Christian, but for a saint before Christianity, where his testimony was separation to God. But the separation of a Christian is of another order — higher and deeper and closer — yet not so external as the Jews'. We might even feel at liberty — as we know the Apostle puts the case — to dine with an infidel. "If thou be disposed to go" — we must take care how we go, and why. Now this might, to the outward eye, seem the very contrary of separateness, and many mistakes are often made in the thoughts of men who judge by outward appearance. But the separation of a Christian is really deeper, although it may not strike the eye as a Jew's. We shall see further proofs of the same evil, for it is a growing one, as the state of Judah became worse and worse before its judgment.

Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, reigns in his father's stead. "Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword." Chap. 21:4. Such did not Jehoshaphat. Howbeit, although he went even farther than his father in alliance with evil — "for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: for he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of Jehovah" — yet, "Jehovah would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that He had made with David." Hence, therefore, we find that when the Edomites revolted, and Jehoram went forth, he smote them. Nevertheless, God chastised him, for "the same time did Libnah revolt under his hand, because he had forsaken Jehovah God of his fathers."

We see in all this history how much turns upon the king. It was no question of the people now, for they had completely

failed long ago. There is a new trial. Suppose the blessing turns upon — not the people, for, it might be said, there are enormous probabilities against their fidelity; but take the family of a faithful man, take the family of the most faithful man in the deep distresses of evil, David, the progenitor of the Messiah—perhaps, if it turns upon that family, one might be found faithful! Not so; there is unfaithfulness everywhere. There was only one faithful witness, and He was not yet come; but those who preceded Him, and who ought to have been the witnesses of the coming Messiah in truth, only precipitated the downfall, first, of Israel as a whole, then of Judah that remained. Hence, Jehoram, we find, “made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah [thereto].” For this was part of the wickedness of heathenism — that it made men more immoral than they would have been on principle and as a matter of honor to their gods.

God sent him now a writing from Elijah the prophet, saying, “Thus saith Jehovah God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father’s house, which were better than thyself: behold, with a great plague will Jehovah smite thy people and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: and thou [shalt have] great sickness.” And so he was to die, and outward troubles came upon him. “Jehovah stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines and of the Arabians.” In fine, “Jehovah smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease,” and thus he died. “And his people made no burning for him like the burning of his fathers.” He had gone on in sin, and he died in sorrow and shame. Such was the end of a son of David, really and literally the son of Jehoshaphat (“Jehovah is judge”).

“And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his stead” (chap. 22). And “he reigned, . . . he also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab.” His mother was that infamous Athaliah, the daughter of Omri. “His mother

was his counsellor to do wickedly." "He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel to war." That is, the first evil begun by a pious king continues. The practice of his son is far from pious, for the bad example of a good man has immense influence, especially with those who are not good. It hardens them, and therefore works deep and ineradicable mischief. "The destruction of Ahaziah was of God," as we are told, "by coming to Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu." And thus he came under the same judgment.

Athaliah, in resentment, now enters upon a most cruel project — the destruction of the royal seed — for she was an idolatress, and she hated the word and the purpose of God. Who but she could have done it so well; for she had all power, apparently, and she had no conscience. Nay, further, hatred and bitterness filled her heart against the true God and the house of David, although she was herself a mother of that house; but still, what will not hatred of God do in reversing all the affections of nature?

So Athaliah, when she saw that her son was dead, "arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah." But God watched her and led Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, to take Joash, a child, from among the king's sons that were slain, and secretly bring him up. "And he was with them hid in the house of God six years," just as the Lord Jesus is now taken away from the midst of the wicked people who slew Him. For it was not merely a murderous intent as against Joash; but the Lord, as we know, was crucified by the hands of lawless men, and now He is hid in the house of God; but He will as surely come forth from that hiding place as Joash did.

When the seventh year came — the complete time according to the ways of God — "in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself" (chap. 23). He was the priest. The priest is prominent while the king is hidden. How truly it is so now in our Lord's case — in His own Person combining both the high priest that is in action and the King that will be by-and-by. And then in this chapter we have further, the most animated picture of this stirring scene — the young king now seated on his throne when the due moment was come. The trusty ser-

vants that were prepared by the high priest, and finally, the last of her, the murderous queen mother, king-destroyer, Athaliah, and the jubilant cries of Israel. When she comes forth, she comes forth crying "Treason," but in truth it was she who had been guilty of both treason and murder to the full; but we see the purpose of God. There cannot be a more lively proof of how thoroughly we may trust Him, for never seemed a more helpless object than this young king Joash before Athaliah. Never were the fortunes of a king of Judah at a lower ebb; but men have said not untruly that "man's extremity is God's opportunity." This only furnishes the occasion to show the supremacy of God. Nothing can hinder His purpose. How truly, therefore, we should trust Him as well as His purpose. He has a purpose about us, and He Himself has a love to our souls. Why should we not always trust Him?

If Joash was brought thus prosperously to the throne through a sea of royal blood, and if judgment inaugurated the judgment of enemies, and if idolatry was put down, and if all now was apparently so bright and hopeful for the king of Judah, it was but for a passing season. "And Joash did what was right in the sight of Jehovah all the days of Jehoiada the priest" (chap. 24). Yes, but it was more the influence of Jehoiada than faith in the living God. An influence, sooner or later, must fail. The influence of man is not the faith of God's elect.

Jehoiada then passes away, after the king had called him to task; for such was his zeal for a little while. Flesh may be even more zealous than faith, but then there is this difference: faith continues; the effort of flesh is transient. It may begin well, but the question is whether it continues. Its continuance is always the grand proof of what is divine. Joash did not continue according to his beginnings; for we are told that after his fair effort in behalf of the neglected repairs of the house of Jehovah, he relaxed, though this is given more elsewhere than here. But here, even, we find the influences, the malignant influences, of the princes of Judah. "The king hearkened unto them," it is said, after the death of Jehoiada. "And they left the house of Jehovah, God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass." Nevertheless, God still testified by His prophets,

and more particularly by Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest. "And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones, at the commandment of the king."

What ingratitude! What perfidy toward the son of his own near relative and the guardian of his own life! "Thus Joash the king," says the Spirit of God most touchingly, "remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died he said, Jehovah look upon it and require it." And so He did, for "it came to pass at the end of the year that the host of Syria came up against him, and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus. For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men." It was not, therefore, might or power; it was God. "And Jehovah delivered a great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the Jehovah God of their fathers." What was a host against Jehovah guiding His people; but now even a small company overwhelms the great host of Judah. "So they executed judgment against Joash." Nor was this all, for he was left in great disease, and his own servants conspired against him who had shed the blood of Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, and they "slew him on his bed, and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchers of the kings."

Thus we see a downward progress. In the former case they made no burning for Jehoram, as they did for his fathers. Now, they do not even bury Joash in the sepulchers of the kings. And if God gives the names of the conspirators, it was not that He had any complacency in them, though their act might not be without righteous judgment. He lets us know that they were those who had not the feeling of Israel, but the heart of an enemy under an Israelitish name; for Zabad was the son of Shimeath, an Ammonitess, and Jozabad, the son of Shimrith, a Moabitess. On the mother's side, the stock was evil, and a mother has enormous influence for good or evil.

Amaziah follows. "And he did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah, but not with a perfect heart" (chap. 25). "Now it came to pass when the kingdom was established to him, that he slew his servants that had killed the king, his father. But

he slew not their children, but did as it is written in the law in the book of Moses, where Jehovah commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin. Moreover, Amaziah gathered Judah together, and made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds." Thus he strengthened himself after a human sort. He also had a hired army. Mercenaries served him — a strange thing for a king of Judah. "But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee." For these mercenaries were Israel. How fallen were both — Judah to hire, and Israel to be hired. The only thing they agreed in was indifference to God. What a state for God's people, and do you suppose that it is a strange thing?

Do you suppose that it is different now? Do you think that Christendom is in a better state as Christendom, than Israel was then as Israel? I do not believe so. We, all of us, feel that the ancient bodies are fallen into idolatry — not more truly Israel into the worship of the calves and of Baal, and all the other abominations, than Greek church or Roman into the worship, the one of pictures and the other of images. What difference? Both are idols — equally idols. But it is not merely so; if the Word of God be possessed (as, thanks be to God, it is) in Protestantism, if not in the same way in the older bodies, nevertheless denominationalism has eaten out the heart of the children of God, and their energies go forth in mere efforts, benevolent, excellent; but meanwhile the glory of God is unthought of. It is work now, not Christ; or if there be a thought, it hardly goes beyond the salvation of souls. The glory of God and those that are saved are forgotten. It is not only that we need, therefore, a call to the unconverted; we need a call to the converted now. It is they more especially that fail to answer to the glory of God, just as Judah did here.

And here we find them joining, and this is one of the greatest snares of the present day. People fancy such wonders are to be done because there is a desire after union. Yes, but a union with abominations, a union with infidelity, a union with sacerdotalism, a union with anything under the sun, provided people only unite in good faith. Where is God? Where is the truth?



Where is the grace of God? Where is the place of the Holy Ghost in all this? Not thought of. I say this only because I believe that many persons read these books of scripture without practical profit; or, if they do take any, they fasten upon merely the good points, forgetting that God has a question about the evil; and in a day of evil it is a bad sign to flatter ourselves that we are cleaving to the good, for invariably, where there is evil there must be repentance; and there cannot be a worse sign than putting off, therefore, the solemn lesson that God is reading us about sin. I do not say that to throw it at others, but to take my full share myself; because I am fully persuaded that where there is the strongest desire even to be separated from evil, there will be the deepest feeling of the evil. There was nobody who felt the evil of Israel so much as Daniel, though there was no one who was more personally separate from it. And yet he always says "we." He does not say "you." He does not say, "It is *your* sin," but "*our* sin." It is "*we* have sinned." He held to the unity of the people of God. We ought to hold to the unity of the Church.

And so, in the same way, it is no use for people to say, I have nothing to do with Popery; I have nothing to do with the Greek church; I have nothing to do with ritualism or the like. That is an improper way to speak. We have a great deal to do with them, because all this is done under the name of Christ. It is like a vast company that has got a common share; and we are partners in the firm unless, indeed, we cut the connection; that is, unless we renounce utterly all the shame and sin of the thing before God, but, at the same time, bear the burden of it. Suppose we have renounced the company in matters of action; we ought to feel the shame and the grief of it if we have any love in our souls for them, or any care for the glory of the Lord. I conceive, therefore, that those who read these sad tales of Israel's, and above all, of Judah's, sin, without making a personal application to Christendom — to the state of God's people now — are putting aside a most solemn admonition that God gives for the conscience, and a sign and token too of the analogy between what is now and what was then. The only difference is that we have incomparably greater privileges and, therefore, a deeper responsibility.

Further, the Word of God is explicit that the Lord Jesus is about to return in judgment; and when He does judge, where will His sternest judgment be? On the heathen? On the Jew? No, on Christendom! I grant you that Jerusalem will be the scene of the tremendous judgment of God; but then Jerusalem was the birthplace of Christianity, as well as the capital of Judaism; and I have not the slightest doubt that at that moment when the Lord returns in judgment the same men will have acquired headship over Christendom as well as over the Jews. Things are coming to that now. Ritualism will soon land Christendom into acknowledgment of Judaism. What an amalgam! A hateful amalgam, not merely an amalgam of unfaithful Christians, but even of Judaism along with Christianity, because the false prophet who is destroyed at the end will be setting himself up in the temple of God, and will be acknowledged in Christendom as well as by the Jews. This is a tremendous catastrophe to look onward to, and I have no doubt of it; and this shows, therefore, how truly the wickedness of Israel portends also not only their future wickedness, but that which is found in Christendom. All will be united in this dreadful union at the close.

Well then this 25th chapter shows us the end of Amaziah after his unholy union with Israel — bought to their own shame, but to his greater shame who could employ them — and the end is strife between the two who had unlawfully joined. And further, Judah who ought to have been the more faithful, as they had the truth in a way that Israel had not, are put to flight before the men of Israel.

What confusion when God was obliged to be against His people — when God was morally compelled to smite even those who had most of His sympathies, but now the more guilty, just because they had more light!

## II Chronicles 26-29

Then follows Uzziah (chap. 26). "And he did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that his father Amaziah did. And he sought God in the days of Zechariah who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought Jehovah, God made him to prosper. And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and break down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-Baal, and the Mehunims. And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened himself exceedingly. Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them. Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry. Moreover, Uzziah had a host of fighting men" — a standing army.

All this, no doubt, looked fair. "But when he was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against Jehovah his God, and went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, that were valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah to burn incense unto Jehovah, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah, God. Then Uzziah was wroth," and although he stood with a censer in his hand, even at that moment, "the leprosy rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of Jehovah from beside the incense altar. And Azariah, the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and

behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him." It was a signal judgment, even in this day of weakness and unfaithfulness. So he lived a leper to the day of his death.

His son Jotham (chap. 27) follows in the right way in a measure as his father did. He entered not into the temple of Jehovah as his father had done; but the people did yet corruptly. However, he builds and wars and becomes mighty, because he prepared his ways before Jehovah his God.

Jotham dies, and Ahaz succeeds him — an impious son who "walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim" (chap. 28). Not satisfied with that, he, even as we know, brought down the pattern of a new altar from Damascus into the very house of God; but God smote him. "Pekah, the son of Remaliah, slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken Jehovah God of their fathers." And so we find further sorrows without end upon Ahaz, so that in the extremity of his distress he sends for a little help to the king of Assyria, only to add to his sorrows.

I need not dwell upon this, though it is one of the most important points in the history of Judah; for it was the great crisis when the magnificent burst of prophecy came from God. Isaiah had begun, no doubt, before, in the days of Uzziah and Jotham; but it was in Ahaz's time that the prophecy of Emmanuel was given; yea, it was to Ahaz himself. What grace! that a wicked man should bring forth from God the distinctest pledge of the glory of the Messiah! Yet, so it was. How completely God moves above the evil of man! And if God be so to the evil, what is He not to the righteous? How should we not then ever confide in His love?

Ahaz, after a most distressful as well as guilty reign, comes to his end; and Hezekiah reigns in his stead (chap. 29). Here we have a man of faith — a man of singular confidence in the Lord — and Hezekiah "in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of Jehovah and repaired them." There was no time lost. In the *first* year and the *first* month! "And he brought in the priests and the Levites

and gathered them together into the east street, and said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of Jehovah God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of Jehovah our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of Jehovah, and turned their backs. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. Wherefore the wrath of Jehovah was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes. For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with Jehovah God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us. My sons, be not now negligent: for Jehovah hath chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that ye should minister unto Him, and burn incense."

What a state! Yet there was the law; but such was the practice. The people of today wonder at the departure in Christendom since the time of the apostles. The departure was not so easy under Israel, because Israel's worship consisted so very much of external observances; and they might be done even by unconverted men. But in the Church everything depends upon the Spirit of God, and therefore the departure is incomparably more easy in the Church than it was under Israel. Yet people wonder that the Church has gone astray. To what purpose have they read their Bibles, and why has God given us this most solemn departure in Israel but to warn us of ours? Has He not in the New Testament put forward prophecy after prophecy of the departure that He saw at hand? "Otherwise thou shalt be cut off." What did it depend upon? On what condition? Except the Gentile continued in the goodness of God, he should be cut off like the Jew. Has the Gentile continued in the goodness of God? Is Protestant devotion and the splitting up of the Church of God without a care? Is Popish or Greek idolatry continuing in the goodness of God? The Gentile has not continued in the goodness of God, and must be cut off no less

than Israel and Judah.

Well, here was a pious man; and what a mercy to think that God raises up individuals in Christendom, as He did in Israel. But you will observe this: no piety of Jehoshaphat, no faith of Hezekiah, turned the current of evil. There is a stay: they find a footing in the midst of the current and they resist it. They are sustained of God, but the current of evil still passes on till it ends in the gulf of judgment. And so we find now. Hezekiah no doubt gave a fair and beautiful promise of a better day. But it was only the morning cloud and passing dew; so he calls upon them not to be negligent, and the Levites answer to his call to cleanse the house of Jehovah.

This was the great thing. It was not merely personal cleansing, but cleansing the house of Jehovah. The house of Jehovah answers to our being gathered together. It is not enough to be personally pure; we ought to be pure in our associations; we ought to be pure in our worship. If there is anything in which we ought to be pure, it is in the worship of God. I cannot understand the piety of persons that are content with what they know is wrong in the worship of God. It seems to me sadly inconsistent, to say the least. I know there are difficulties. Faith always has difficulties but faith always surmounts them. So it was with Hezekiah. No doubt it seemed a very strange thing to be blaming everybody for so long a time; but he did not think of that, and I am persuaded that Hezekiah was not a high-minded, but a most lowly man. It is a mere stigma and calumny to call faith proud. The world always does. Christians ought not to do so; they ought to know better.

So they began on the first day of the first month. What alacrity! "Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of Jehovah: so they sanctified the house of Jehovah in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end." v. 17. Then they went unto Hezekiah the king and told him. Hezekiah prepares accordingly. "Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city and went up to the house of Jehovah." It is all the same stamp. It was a man filled with a sense of the glory of God, and there was not a moment to be lost. If I want to obey, why should

I not begin at once? What am I waiting for? "And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and, seven he-goats, for a sin offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary and for Judah. And he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of Jehovah. So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood and sprinkled it on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar. And they brought forth the he-goats for the sin offering before the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon them. And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel."

Let me call your attention to what is said here — "*for all Israel*," as we also have it in the 21st verse — "*for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah.*" Not for Judah only, but for the whole nation, Israel and Judah. This is a fine action of Hezekiah's faith. Personally pure and devoted in his own sphere, his heart went out toward all that belonged to God. They might be idolaters, but he makes an atonement. The more, therefore, they needed the atonement, the more they needed that others should feel for them if they felt not for themselves and for God.

And so we should feel now. We ought not to care merely for the Christians that we know. Surely we ought to love them; but our hearts ought always, in private and in public, to take in the whole Church of God. We are never right if we do not. There is sectarian leaven in our hearts if we do not go out toward all that are of God. So with Hezekiah. It was for all Israel — for the king commanded. It was the king, you see. The priests, no doubt, did not think about it. They were so accustomed merely to offer up sacrifices for Judah that they, no doubt, never thought about "*all Israel*"; but the king did. "The king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel." And everything was done in its proper order. There was no neglect of what was seemly or decent. "And he set the Levites in the house of Je-

hovah with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for so was the commandment of Jehovah by His prophets. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of Jehovah began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded, and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped. Moreover, Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praises unto Jehovah with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped."

And thus all was done in beautiful order and, as we are told in the last verses, "the service of the house of Jehovah was set in order. And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly." But it was none the worse for that. There had been nothing like this since the days of king Solomon; so long had care for the house of God fallen into disuse.



## II Chronicles 30-31

But Hezekiah was not content with this (chap. 30). "He sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh that they should come to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem to keep the passover unto Jehovah God of Israel." This seemed, no doubt, a very bold thing, and I have not a doubt that they considered that the king was behaving in a very presumptuous manner. What business had he to send to all Israel? He was only the king of Judah! Why should he not be content with his own people? He was proselyting. They did not like it. They thought it was exceedingly improper to be taking away the Israelites to Jerusalem. But Hezekiah was thinking of God. Hezekiah was filled with a sense of what was due to the claims of Jehovah. Jehovah had set His house in one place for all Israel.

Now there is nothing that gives a person such boldness as this, and nothing, also, that sets love to work so earnestly as this. If we are merely contending for doctrines of our own, it does seem rather strong to expect other people to receive them. If it is merely my own doctrine, I had better make myself happy with my own affairs. But if it is God's grace, if it is God's worship, if it is God's way, has it not a claim upon all that are God's? The moment you see that, you can go forward; and you can appeal to the conscience of all that belong to God, that they should be faithful to God's own will and Word. And what I want the children of God to see now clearly, and all the children of God as far as He is pleased to give it efficacy, is that they are set not merely upon something better than what other people have, but upon what is God's will, because that must be the best of all; and inasmuch as they have got the Book of God, they can see and are responsible to find this out for themselves. Anything that is herein has a claim upon a child of God — and more particularly as regards the worship of God. I grant you that in human things what is of man has a claim; but not so in divine things. "Render, therefore,

to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

I think it was in this spirit, therefore, not trying to be a Caesar over Israel, or even recalling Israelites to their allegiance to himself, which perhaps he might have done, that Hezekiah so acted. He was a man of faith, and he knew well that it was of God, the rending of the ten tribes from the house of David; and therefore he did not ask the tribes for himself, but he did ask them for God. He sent out "to all Israel and Judah" (chap. 30). And so should we do now. We ought not to desire the world. Let men, if they will, seek the world and the pretended worship of the world. Let them seek "the masses," as they say. Let them have the masses if they will, and if the masses are weak enough to follow them. But the business of faith is to call upon all who have faith in the name of the Lord, and to get them to follow His Word. So did Hezekiah now, according to what God gave him. "And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation." What I call your attention particularly to is this: nobody thought of all this for all these years — nobody thought of it but Hezekiah. The more you draw near to God, the more you love the people of God. It was because God was so great in Hezekiah's eyes that the people of God were so dear to Hezekiah; and so he claimed them for God, and called them to come out from their abominations. "They established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto Jehovah God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written!" How quickly people departed from what was written!

"So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel" — not merely, "Ye children of Judah," but "Ye children of Israel" — "turn again unto Jehovah God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and He will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers and like your brethren which trespassed against Jehovah God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation as ye see. Now, be ye not stiff-necked, as your

fathers were, but yield yourselves unto Jehovah, and enter into His sanctuary, which He hath sanctified for ever." God's principles do not change. It is all a mistake that because the apostles are gone, the apostles' truth is gone. Not so; it abides, and forever. It is always binding on the people of God. So here with the sanctuary in Jerusalem. "So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them."

As it was then, so it is now. The more true, the more it be according to God, so the more is the contempt of men who have chosen to blend the world with Christ. "Nevertheless, divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem." In the most unlikely and distant quarters, and where no one could possibly look for them, there are those that have humbled themselves and have come. "Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king, and of the princes, by the word of Jehovah." And there they assembled. "And they arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away and cast them into the brook Kidron. Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month, and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of Jehovah, and they stood in their place" — because this was in consequence of some not being ready. The priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently. The second month was the gracious provision that God made in the case of uncleanness in the wilderness, as we may see in Numbers 9:10, 11.

How good is the word of the Lord! They must keep the passover; but, on the other hand, they could not keep it if they were unclean. This provision came in, therefore, when they were consciously unclean, that they might purify themselves and keep it so now. But there is no lowering the standard. There ought to be consideration for the weakness, and there is given them time to learn; but the standard must not be lowered. And so we find, further, that "the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread

seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised Jehovah day by day, singing with loud instruments unto Jehovah. And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites"; and, in fact, there was a happy and a holy time come, "for Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. So there was great joy in Jerusalem."

In the next chapter (31), we find that this faithfulness on the part of the Jews of Judah gave a great impulse to their fidelity. True faithfulness always flows from faith, and if we are right in the worship of God, we shall seek to be right in our walk. A low worship always goes with a low walk. It would be an awful thing and most condemnatory if there was carelessness of God's worship and a want of care of our personal ways and walk. We have to see to that. "Then all the children of Israel returned, every man to his own possession, into their own cities. And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests," for he was not content with what he had done. He carries out the work still more fully. And we are told in the end of the 31st chapter, "Thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before Jehovah his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered."

## II Chronicles 32-36

But now we find the Assyrian (chap. 32). "And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, he took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him. So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water. Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance. And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying, Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is Jehovah our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah." vv. 2-8.

So Sennacherib sends his servants with a most insulting message, and these letters and oral insults were meant to alarm and stir up the people even against the king. "For this cause Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz prayed and cried to heaven. And Jehovah sent an angel which cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword. Thus Jehovah saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib."

We are told very briefly, also, of the sickness of Hezekiah and of the Lord's marvelous recovery of him. "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him;

for his heart was lifted up"; and even this good king thus brings wrath upon Israel. Again, it is the king that decides all. How blessed when there is a king reigning in righteousness, when all will be decided in favor of the people, without a flaw. That is the purpose of God, and these kings on whom the burden rested then were the witnesses of the King that is coming; for I trust that all here believe that the Lord Jesus will not only be exalted in heaven, but in the earth. It is a great failure in the faith of any man, and a sad gap in the creed of those who do not believe that the Lord Jesus is going to reign over the earth. What has God made the earth for? For the devil? It would look like it if the Lord is not going to reign, for Satan has had it in his own way ever since sin came into the world [of course, within limits]. Is the earth for Satan even in the midst of God's people? Oh, no! All things were made for Christ. All things are by Him. In all things He will have the pre-eminence.

In the dispensation of the fullness of times, all will be gathered under the headship of Christ — not merely things in heaven, but things on earth — and then will be the blessed time which people vainly hope for now — the time when nation will not war against nation, and when men will learn war no more.

There will be such a day; but it is reserved for Christ, not for the Church. It is reserved for Christ when the Church is out of the world. In fact, so far from the Church correcting the world, she has not been able to keep her own purity. The Church has sold herself to the world, and is now merely like all unfaithful spouses that have betrayed their true husbands. Now the world is tired of her, and is beating her away with shame and scorn. This is going on in all lands. The days are fast coming when there will not be a land in the world where the Church — for which Christ gave Himself — is not cast off. I do not say that to excuse the world, but I do say it to take the shame of it to ourselves. For, undoubtedly, had the Church walked in purity, she would never have sought the world's glory, nor have been in the world's embraces, and would never have been exposed to the world's casting her off as a wretched and corrupt woman.

Well (chap. 33), Manasseh follows this pious king who now has been called to sleep. The ways of Manasseh were first, a

most painful outburst of all abomination, yet of the mercy of God at the last. For this very Manasseh, after his sin — after he had made Judah and Jerusalem to sin and do worse than the heathen — is taken by the king of Assyria and carried to Babylon, and there taught with thorns. But in affliction he humbles himself before the God of his fathers and prays to Him; and God heard and brought him back again. "Then Manasseh knew that Jehovah He was God" v. 13. This is a history most peculiar. Others, alas! had begun well and ended ill. He began as ill as any had ever done, and worse than any before; but he had a blessed end. He took away the strange gods and idols which he had himself set up, and the altars that he had made; and he repaired the altar and offered peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve Jehovah. And "so Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house; and Amon his son reigned in his stead." But Amon did that which was evil, according to his father's beginning, not according to his end; "and his servants conspired against him and slew him in his own house, and made his son Josiah king in his stead."

Josiah was a king as remarkable for conscientious service to God as any man that ever reigned in Judah. How remarkable — not, alas! that a pious king should have an impious son, but that an impious father should have a pious son. This indeed was grace.

Josiah, then, and his reformation is brought before us (chap. 34). He was young when he began to reign — only eight years old — and "in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence, and the images that were on high above them, he cut down: and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars" — nothing could be more thorough-going than this action against the false gods — "and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. And so

did he in the cities of Manasseh and Ephraim and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about. And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem."

For, you observe, he goes beyond his own sphere. He goes out into "the cities of Manasseh and Ephraim and Simeon, even unto Naphtali."

There is amazing vigor in this young king. "And in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of Jehovah his God." And God shows him signal mercy, for there it was that the priest Hilkiah found the book of the law of Jehovah given to Moses. "And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan." The king hears of it and, just as I have said, his conscience is the remarkable part of this good king; for when he hears the words of Jehovah, he rends his clothes. Had he not been pious? Had he not been faithful? Yes, but he forgot the things that were behind, and he pressed toward those that were before. He did not think of the good that he had done, but of the evil that, alas! was still around him, and of the good that he had not done and that remained before him.

So he sends, saying, "Go, enquire of Jehovah for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found, for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah, to do after all that is written in this book." And God answers his desires. "And Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath," and she gives the answer from Jehovah, and the king acts upon it, and humbles himself before the Lord. "And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers."

He too keeps a passover (chap. 35). He kept it, as we are



told, on the fourteenth day of the first month, for now things are more in order as far as this was concerned. The preparations were made more orderly than in the hurried preparations of king Hezekiah, which they were obliged to keep in the second month. This chapter gives us a full account of this striking passover. There was no passover, we are told, like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet. Of Hezekiah's it was said there had been none such since the days of Solomon; but of Josiah's it is said, "since the days of Samuel." We have to go up to earlier times to find with what to compare it. The reformation, therefore, was remarkably complete in appearance. Alas! what was beneath the surface was corrupt and vile — not in Josiah, nor in certain godly ones that gathered in sympathy round the king, but in the mass of the people — and Josiah himself shows, after this, the usual failure of man; for he goes out unbidden against the king of Egypt when he had come against Charchemish. And, though he is warned by Pharaoh that he does not wish to fight with him, Josiah would not turn back. "He disguised himself that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away, for I am sore wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah." Yet not they only; there was one heart more true than any — Jeremiah. Jeremiah knew from the Lord that there was buried the last worthy representative of the house of David. All that followed was only a shame and a scandal. It was but the filling up of the measure of their sins that they might be carried away into Babylon. Josiah was taken from the evil to come. "Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel; and behold they are written in the Lamentations."

"Then the *people* of the land took Jehoahaz" — for, indeed, it could not be said to be God now in any sense. "The people

of the land took Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem. Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem" (chap. 36). And his brother, or near relative at any rate, Eliakim, was made king, with his name changed to Jehoiakim. But as the king of Egypt made him king, so the king of Babylon unmade him; for he comes up and carries him to Babylon, and sets up Jehoiachin his son in his stead. And he too did what was evil and was brought to Babylon; and Zedekiah his brother, as we are told, was made king over Judah and Jerusalem. He brings the disasters of Jerusalem to their last crisis, for he it was who was sworn by the oath of Jehovah, and broke it, and gave the awful spectacle before the world, that a heathen had more respect for the name of Jehovah than the king of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar trusted that that name, at least, would have moral weight. Zedekiah feared it less than Nebuchadnezzar. Impossible, therefore, that God should allow such a stain to remain upon the throne and the house of David; so destruction came to the uttermost, and the last portion of Judah was swept away by the Chaldees, and the land must enjoy her sabbaths, "for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath to fulfill threescore and ten years." And thus we see them back in captivity till God raises up Cyrus to make the way back for a remnant of Judah.

## **"SURELY I COME QUICKLY"**

*"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22:20.*

Brethren, hark! the midnight cry!  
Lo! the Bridegroom draweth nigh!  
Let us all with joy proclaim Him,  
Lest our careless slumbers shame Him;  
Shame, were ready none to meet Him,  
None prepared with joy to greet Him!

Shame to us, were robes not white;  
Shame, were lamps not burning bright;  
Shame, if not our vigils keeping,  
He should find the virgins sleeping!  
Hark! my brethren, hear the cry,  
"Lo, the Bridegroom draweth nigh!"

Let us each repeat the cry,  
Louder let the tidings fly;  
Every virgin swell the story  
Of the Bridegroom's coming glory!  
Lamps all burning, hearts all beating,  
Longing for the joyous meeting. Amen!

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## GOD THE FOUNTAIN

O blessed God! how kind  
Are all Thy ways to me —  
Whose dark, benighted mind  
Was enmity with Thee.  
Yet now, subdued by sovereign grace,  
My spirit longs for Thine embrace.

How precious are Thy thoughts  
That o'er my spirit roll!  
They swell beyond my faults,  
And captivate my soul.  
How great their sum, how high they rise,  
Can ne'er be known beneath the skies.

Preserved by Jesus, when  
My feet made haste to hell!  
And there should I have gone,  
But Thou dost all things well.  
Thy love was great, Thy mercy free,  
Which from the pit delivered me.

Before Thy hands had made  
The sun to rule the day,  
Or earth's foundation laid,  
Or fashioned Adam's clay —  
What thoughts of peace and mercy flowed  
In Thy great heart of love, O God!

A monument of grace,  
A sinner saved by blood,  
The streams of love I trace,

Up to the fountain, God,  
And in His sovereign counsel see  
Eternal thoughts of love to me.

## "LOOKING UNTO JESUS"

Look, my soul, on yonder tree,  
There thy Saviour died for thee;  
On the cross He bleeding hung,  
Mocked by every scornful tongue;  
There He shed His precious blood  
To redeem my soul to God.  
Look, my soul, with wonder see  
Christ upon the cross for thee.

Look, my soul, to yonder tomb,  
Where enwrapped in deepest gloom,  
'Neath death's dark and iron sway,  
Christ a willing captive lay.  
There from death he soon awoke,  
There the tyrant's bands He broke.  
Look, my soul, to Joseph's tomb,  
There immortal glories bloom.

Look, my soul, to God's right hand;  
There behold thy Saviour stand —  
There in heavenly majesty,  
See, He intercedes for thee.  
Look again, the clouds grow bright;  
Jesus comes in robes of light,  
Comes in glory, comes for thee,  
O my soul, expectant be!

Look, my soul, thy Saviour reigns,  
God His right o'er earth maintains,  
Wears His everlasting crown,  
Nations 'round Him bowing down.  
Now, my soul, before Him fall,  
Hail and crown Him Lord of all;  
With Him suffer shame and pain,  
Then in glory with Him reign.

H. L. H. (1886)